

THE
NEW LOOK

MAGAZINE OF CINEMA & TELEVISION FANTASY N°35 70p/\$2.00

STARBURST

NOW WITH MORE COLOUR
THAN EVER BEFORE!

RAY HARRYHAUSEN ON
CLASH of the TITANS

DIRECTOR RICHARD DONNER ON
SUPERMAN II

REVIEWS OF THE FAN, EXCALIBUR,
ALTERED STATES, AND CLASH
OF THE TITANS

PLUS
A FULL COLOUR SF COMIC STRIP
TALES FROM THE RIM



ALTERED STATES



CLASH OF THE TITANS



CONDORMAN

THE RICHARD DONNER INTERVIEW

RICHARD DONNER TALKS TO SUPERHEROIST
ABOUT HIS PART IN SUPERMAN II AND
THE REASONS BEHIND HIS DECISION TO
DIRECT. SEE PAGE 50.

ALTERED STATES

REGULAR STAN BURST CELEBRATES JOHN CUSACK'S
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CONVENTION CORNER

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WERE HELD DURING THE EARLIER PART
OF THIS YEAR. SEE PAGE 46.



EXCALIBUR WE REVIEW THE NEW SWORD AND
SORCERY EPIC. SEE PAGE 16.



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John Bowles
John Brosnan
Tony Crawley
Phil Edwards
John Fleming
Alan Jones
Tisa Vahimagi

STARBURST

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STARBURST LETTERS

ROY ASHTON WRITES

I do thank you for your kindness in sending your Marvel Monthly Starburst, and for the very fittering amount of space devoted to myself in John Fleming's very good article. I really feel I am somebody after reading it through. I will immediately read it through again — before my head starts to deflate.

Your cover illustration of the Scanners effect is quite timely. I gave my vote to this very good film when acting on the Jury at the recent Madrid Festival of Fantasy and Horror. The Award went to Scanners — as did the Award for best make-up and best special effects. So my opinion was backed up by my fellow Jurors.

Thank you also for the other issues of Starburst which you have been so kind as to send me. They have an honoured place in my archives.

Roy Ashton,
Cobham,
Surrey.

ARE YOU GETTING IT EVERY MONTH?

Help! Will somebody please tell me what's going on. I quite happily had a regular order for Starburst until issue 19. I know that's a long time ago but after they told me "Sorry, they've closed down." Huh? I thought, how come the rest of the Marvel line is still being published? So I kept on at them, even changed my newsagent, to no avail. They insisted you had given up, some places didn't even believe you had ever existed. Then a miracle. I found issue 29 in Blackpool. At last, proof. I waved the copy under their noses.

Two months later I was finally told "they've gone subscription only." I could have cried — I was already climbing the wall.

This Easter I went to Blackpool again and was nearly thrown out of a shop for leaping up and

AN UNFORTUNATE NECESSITY



It had to happen. After managing to maintain Starburst's cover price at a mere 60 pence for the last eighteen issues, in the face of ever-spiralling costs and soaring inflation, we have finally been forced to raise our price to 70p. We are only sorry that advance warning couldn't be given.

But, as always, we feel that we owe it to you, the reader, to give the very best value for money. Beginning this issue, we have included an extra eight pages of colour and a brand-new feature, *Tales from the Rim*, an all-original, full-colour comic strip by Marvel comics editor Paul Neary. We'll be looking forward to your comments on this experiment.

In the meantime, the bleary-eyed Starburst staff, (pictured above, left to right) Rahid Khan, Alan McKenzie and Steve O'Leary, will continue to burn the midnight oil (good grief, is that the time?) in an effort to produce the best magazine we know how — with more than a little help from our intrepid band of writers.

Next month: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (from Lucas and Spielberg), *Escape from New York* (from John Carpenter) and an in-depth interview with Howling director Joe Dante. We hope you will be here!

Alan McKenzie, June 1981.

down with delight when I found a copy of issue 32.

So can you please explain what's going on end, if possible, where I can obtain Starburst from (and where I can get back issues from)?

Nicole Berrett,
Brighem,

Nr Cockermouth.

Alan McKenzie replies: Tell you what's going on? I wish I knew myself! But it's something of a

coincidence that your troubles started with Starburst 20. This was the first issue with which newsagents and wholesalers were unable to return their unsold copies. Though sales of Starburst have steadily risen since then, obviously some newsagents didn't like the idea of possibly being landed with unreturnable, unsold copies and reduced or cancelled their orders.

If you are having trouble

getting Starburst every month please write direct to our distributor, telling them of the problem. Send your letters to: David Orme, Comag, 184 Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex.

Subscriptions and back issues are available from our subscription agents, Dangerous Visions, 191 Spital Road, Meldon, Essex. A twelve month subscription costs £9.50, a six month sub costs £5.50. Back issues available are 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15 at 50p each and 17, 18, 19, 22-34 at 60p each. Please make all cheques and P.O.s payable to Dangerous Visions.

As for newsagents telling you those terrible lies, what can I say? We are not going out of business. We have not gone subscription only (though Starlog has in America — perhaps that's where they got the idea from). In fact, Starburst has never been starthanded, thanks to you, our readers!

TV HISTORY BOOK

To reply to a couple of points raised by Tim Vahinegi in his column in Starburst 31. Why, he asks, doesn't someone write the British version of *Fantastic Television*?

In fact, such a study has been written covering all aspects of videotranslation on the small screen between the years 1950-1980, (which unfortunately excludes the BBC Time Machine, but very little else.) The manuscript, provisionally titled *Videofantasy* (though I'm open to suggestions), has been undergoing preliminary editing at LSP since October of last year. The aim of the book — apart from the obvious financial one — was to redress the balance in favour of our own home-produced fantasies. Though Gary Gerani's book is an excellent addition to the history of the genre, I did feel it rather (understandably) short-changed the British shows other than the film series like *Space: 1999* and *The*

Please send all comments and criticisms to:
Starburst Letters, Starburst Magazine,
Marvel Comics Ltd, Jadwin House,
205-211 Kentish Town Road,
London, NW5, United Kingdom.

Prisoner. Surely Doctor Who warrants more than a paragraph, considering its status as the longest-running fantasy show in tv history?

No firm commitment has been reached yet regarding *Video-fantasy* but if and when it is, you will be the second to know, Tise.

Jon Olden,
Granada TV Centre,
Manchester.

LATE NIGHT BUSINESS

As an avid late-night movie-goer I had to write when I saw Tony Crawley's short article on late night films in the States. At the Hempstead Classic late-night shows on Friday and Saturday, there are always good crowds, and they have three theatres showing double bills! I find this far better value for money than perhaps paying the same price to see one "blockbuster" (i.e. *Superman*, *Flesh Gordon*).

The most popular late-night shows are Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Rocky Horror Picture Show, in my opinion, as there is always a very nearly full house. However, other readers may disagree... I If only more cinemas take the trouble to venture into late night shows, they can only make a profit.

Jackie Phillips,
Colindale,
London.

UFO NETWORK MOVES

We enjoy reading *Starburst* very much and we read with particular interest the article by Phil Edwards on the movie 2001 (*Starburst* 34). Since you published our letter some months ago inviting readers who are interested in UFOs to get in touch with us, we have had many enquiries but we have to inform your readers that we have now changed our address and our new address is 36 Birkbeck Road, Mill Hill, London NW7.

R. Lawrence,
UFO Network.



THE LAST WORD...

In reply to Martin Kelsey's letter I'd like to explain several points of my letter to which he's taken exception and, to my mind, missed the whole point of the letter.

Martin seems to think I have a grudge against Peter Davison, not so. In fact I've gone to great pains to say I admire him as an actor. The fact that he was not on my list doesn't enter into it, mentally the list was compiled before his entrance, the fact is he was picked and is the new Doctor Who and cannot be altered now whether I like it or not! There are no sour grapes on that score. Nor do I have a vendetta against "the boy and two girl assistants." The vendetta is merely a grouse that Peter is going to be undermined by three equally young time travellers where the character of who should be authoritarian. Martin seems to feel I doubt their contributions to the show, I don't, they are competent actors but only the boy has had time to build a rapport with the audience, the girls only recently appearing on the scene so as yet their characters are a little shallow.

My main criticism was directed at John Nathan-Turner in that here he was cramming the TAROTS with assistants only to please a young actor in the pivotal role. Being a young active actor it

seemed stupid that Davison would need any help at all. Plus the fact that K-9 was "pensioned off" because it was felt he was undermining Baker's authority as the Doctor. That is why I said Davison possibly couldn't cut it, he's hampered by a confused producer with an uneasy format still to prove it can settle down and work. Taking this further I think that K-9 reappears (as promised) two of the assistants will be jettisoned so therefore why have they bothered with them at all? No Martin, I am willing to give Davison a fair chance (as pointed to in the letter) and realise that transitions are sticky periods but all I said in that letter I also addressed to Nethen-Turner. So a back stabber I'm not (front-stabber maybe!)

Having said that, it is nice to see that Doctor Who has fans that will fight for what they care and believe in. Differences of opinion do occur and rightly so, at least we care. John Broonan is often attacked for a 'bad' review that is his opinion expressed because of his love for our favourite subject, science fiction. If you sat there and failed to react then you just don't care enough. Be involved, let your views be heard, use the letters' pages to good advantage, that's what it's there for!

That's why I'm sad Paul Ottawa is giving up his *Doctor Who Appreciation Society* membership. You cared enough to join, Paul, just because you don't like the new Doctor or new

direction of the show, don't give up on it altogether! Gauge fellow members' reactions, offer constructive criticism to Davison and the producer but don't give up! Fight for what you think is right!

So to Paul and Martin, opposing reactions to my letter, I thank you both for your views and hope you'll continue to watch and enjoy the adventures of our beloved character (whoever plays him doesn't matter so long as he survives!) and I hope to "see" you both again through the pages of the *Starburst* letters column, (another worthy cause to fight for!) here endeth the commercial and please guys, we're all friends, the names Bill, Mr Scully's my Dad! Keep the faith, may the force be with you, etc.

Bill Scully,
Birkinhead,
Merseyside.

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THINGS TO COME

FANTASY TV

Within minutes, or so it seemed, of *Excalibur* bursting box-offices to the tune of \$11-million in ten American days, the rip-off version hit screens. NBC gave e Sunday night prime-time spot to writer-producer-director Nicholas Corea's *The Archer*—Fugitive from the Empire. An unwieldy title, attempting to cash in on bow-and-sorcery and *Star Wars*. But then it was also an unwieldy show. Or unfinished, at least. I know they rush tv-movies and series pilots in Hollywood, but *The Archer* had great gaping holes in the narrative. At one gripping point, in the show's first all important dozen minutes—grab your audience early, lads!—our hero and his instructor were set upon by a wild dog pack. Then, blank screen. No commercials, just blank. Then our hero, now with a beautiful companion, is happily ensconced in a cave. How on earth he got there was never explained. Either the killing of the dogs had been deemed too violent... or it was just never shot. Whatever the reason, it sure didn't help keep viewers happy, or even much interested from then on.

For the rest of the two hours, The

Archer—the hero's skill, not surname; he's not from Ambbridge—was an unhappy mix of copy-Tolkien and kids' (and I do mean little kids') comics, with Corea's dialogue forever backing and forthing between a weak attempt at noble English and American street slang.

A certain Lane Caudell was the hero, your averagely handsome young prince, accused of slaying his father (George Kennedy, on leave from the *Airport* films). This means Caudell couldn't become king in his dead father's place. And so off, he goes in search of ... well, some Ben-Kenobi style ancient sage to help him regain his rights. But to stop him, Kabid Bedi, no less, Clive Donner's *Thief of Bagdad* (1978).

Beck to the drawing board, fellows! To make fantasy like this work on (American) television, more time is required. In both the scripting and screening. Time to slowly unravel the magic and mystery, instead of cramming the whole shooting match into one night.

Oh, one last point, creator Nicholas Corea—a new face to tv, I think—made the show for Universal with his own company, Mad Dog Productions. That, I'm afraid, sums up *The Archer* ell too well.

POLISH PARABLE

Beleaguered Poland lost to Canada, three-four, at the second Festival of Imaginative and Science Fiction Cinema in Madrid. David Cronenberg won the Best Director nod for *Screams*, which also took the special effects and make-up trophies, but nothing for an actor losing his head in a role.

Poland ran off with the top film honours—and much deserved—for a devastating re-tread of the golem legend in Piotr Szulkin's first long feature after several award-winning shorts, *Golem*.

His setting for a futuristic enclave, where technology is king, and the monsters are the people, obedient, passive, programmed puppets, "taken care of" by medics and police serving the great Mankind Reconstruction Project. And one member of Szulkin's bizarre society—Pernat—is in grave danger of being unmasked for what he is. A foul degenerate. A human being . . .

Here was something of a 1984 golem, except that even a blind viewer could understand that Szulkin

was really showing Poland in the year he made the film: 1979. One scene in particular spelt this out in graphic terms. Marek Walczewski as Pernat, the odd human out, attempts to hide from his "protectors" at one point in a festive crowd of people—which turns out to be no more than a television-projected phantom. In Pernat's world there are no crowds. For crowds mean trouble. Dissent. Dispute. Crowds could mean that which the pessimism pervading Poland in 1979 didn't dare

WELSH MERLIN

I would expect better things of Harlech TV's new fantasy serial, *the Labyrinth*, from the Kidnapped team. Ron Moody plays Rotho the sorcerer. His powers aren't quite what they were and his three unlikely champions are children. . . . Unlike *The Archer*, pretentious, it won't be. Just rather simple . . .

Also due from America—you sure want to hear this?—a series called *Mr Merlin*

KNIGHT-RIDERS

George Romero's momentary departure from the horror field, *Knightriders*, was given a big, ballyhoed premiere at the recent Film Exp(osition) in Los Angeles. Certain critics went bananas; they're the ones quoted on his ad (or course). Frankly, though, Romero without blood is a triffler un-nerving, to say the least—you keep expecting carnage around every next corner. There was

dream of Solidarity. And Lech Wałęsa.

The fine film, ovariating at 92 minutes and maybe another Szulkin short blown up at the last moment, also picked up the script award for the director and Tadeusz Sobolski. Plus a special mention from the jury, including Britain's John Gilling, Belgian Harry Kurnel (remember *Daughters of Darkness* and Andrea Reu . . . ?) and Germany's Peter Fleischmann.

Among visiting directors rewarded

room for it too, in this woefully over-long (145 minutes) tale of modern knights, presenting jousts around county and Renaissance-style fairs. There's more talk than action, although what there is was brilliantly staged. Romero had too many targets at once, and chooses to attack television too often, and for too long, whereas his real message, I think, is calling for a return to the nobility and integrity of Camelot days . . . whether King Arthur's or Jack Kennedy's, I'm not too sure. The top billed Ed Harris, described by someone as a young McQueen, will hardly go far after this film. A far better performer is Romero's usual special effects man Tom Savini as Harris's Arthurian foe.

007 MARK 13

Despite all the rumours, Roger Moore would appear determined to equal Sean Connery's record of six Bonds—and maybe go one further . . . He's fit enough, so I hear, to remain in 007's shoes and stylish clopper for the 13th in the series—which will be . . . *Octopussy!* *Octopussy* (circa 1985), was Ian Fleming's final James Bond book, published after his death in 1964, and was—like the source of that year's Bond biggie, *For Your Eyes*

for their trip to Madrid were Norman J. Warren, from London, with his *Invisible* winning the Best Music prize for John Scott . . . and Yugoslav Krsto Papic, whose *Secret of Nikola Tesla* earned Best Actor kudos for Petar Bozovic.

Another Canadian film, Alvin Rakoff's *Death Ship* received the trophy for the Best Sets. Pity, Rakoff didn't do anything with them . . . Piotr Szulkin did so much more, with so much less.



Above: A scene from Piotr Szulkin's first feature length film, *Golem*.

Compiled by Tony Crawley



Left: To the whistled refrain of Colonel Bogey (some kind of reference to Bridge Over the River Kwai, I think!) the cavemen transport their take-away food home. Above: Ringo meets an amorous plant.

Only—a collection of short stories.

In other words, Cubby Broccoli has finally reached the end of the Bond books. Not that he was ever shooting them in order of publication. Oh, there's still more short stories left. Four others in the *Eyes Only* book (1960) and two left in *Octopussy*. Few, though, have the real feel of an 007 film title. I can't, for example, imagine Shirley Bassey—or this year's Sheena Easton—wrapping their larynxes around 'From a View to a Kill', 'A Quantum of Solace', 'The Property of a Lady', or 'The Hildebrand Rarity'. Two that could work are 'Risico' and 'The Living Daylights'. (Then again, I am, as it happens, having delicious thoughts about Bassey, Sheena or better still, Carly Simon, singing *Octopussy*...).

The end of the Fleming books does not, obviously, mean the end of the films, though it's doubtful if another Bond will be quite so futuristic, and thereby so expensive, as *Moonraker*. The books have been dropped years ago, really, being extended, invented upon, and wholly re-written (particularly *The Spy Who Loved Me*; 1977), with the Bond scripts paying mere lip service to the original title and some of Fleming's characters. After *Octopussy*, then we can expect all future Bonds to be wholly original tales... and to be honest it's about time the films did get more original. Rather too much of *For Your Eyes Only* is reminiscent of the action of previous films, especially George Lazenby's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969),

with all the ski'n' snow stuff.

Whether Roger Moore stays on the sixth—or seventh Bond outing, there should be at least one new face in next year's film. It begins shooting around the same time as *Revenge of the Jedi*, but will open earlier at Christmas 1982. A new M is required. The Secret Service chief does not appear in *Eyes Only*, following the death, during the production, of the veteran British character actor

Bernard Lee—M since Dr No in 1962. His scenes were divided between a Government Minister (of Defence, I suppose) and the ever-fussy Q. Recasting M takes time and was not to be rushed for this year. I'm given to understand that Miss Moneyenny herself (Lois Maxwell, again, in the role since 1962) might win promotion from M's secretary to M's chair in January! Q will be miffed. As usual,

I expect John Glenn to continue as



The two faces of Roger Moore's Bond. Left: In action on a mountain side in *For Your Eyes Only*. Above: The more familiar suave image.

PREHISTORIC RINGO

Kubrick the Almighty is sent up—but rotten—in *Caveman*, the new film starring Ringo Starr and his recent bride, Barbra Bach. Stan is in good company. Also belted around the screen for laughs are Raquel Welch's *One Million Years BC* and much of Ray Harryhausen. Directed by Spielberg's *Jaws* scripter, Carl Gottlieb, the farce is set in *One Million BC*. Gottlieb also worked on the script with Mel Brooks writer Rudy De Luce—and that can't have been easy, ell the dialogue is in grunts and growls with nary a vowel. The result is quite the zaniest thing around since *Airplane*, in fact. Bags of bad taste, Mrs Starr's mainly unclothed torso, Ringo's infectious good humour, and gibes galore at 2001, 10 and *River Kwai*, not to mention some great terrible Godzilla-like effects from David Allen and Roy Arbogast.

the 007 director, and Michael G. Wilson (who also had a hand in this year's scripting with Dr No's Richard Maibum) will continue as executive producer. Obviously. He's Cubby Broccoli's step-son, you see. But talk not of nepotism. Wilson dreamed up the best pre-credit sequence of all since *Thunderball* (1965), with the famous Union Jack ski-parachute jump in *The Spy Who Loved Me*. He's earned his position. ▶



THINGS TO COME

WHITE HOUSERS

Jack Ford, son of America's last Republican President, the accident-prone Gerry Ford, is among the cast of John Carpenter's big new hit, *Escape from New York*. I'm not sure why—just publicity, no doubt. The movie, after all, is about rescuing an American Prez after his plane crashes in New York in 1997, when Manhattan is one gigantic jail. Certainly, the casting has little to do with Jack's acting abilities, already seen briefly in a Burt Lancaster Western—and about as tame as those of Reagan's actress daughter, Patti. The two offspring share the same agent—the William Morris agency.

Jack's sister is rather better than both of them. She was the stills photographer on *Jaws II*.

WINNER'S WISH

In the wake of the Atlanta killings, the *Reagan* shooting—and its connections with the *Taxi Driver* film—Britain's Michael Winner has been defending screen violence. But then again, he has to. Having made the first of the vigilante movies, *Death Wish* (1974), he's now in Hollywood directing the sequel, which has the truly amazing title of *Death Wish II*. Charles Bronson stars again, with his wife, Jill Ireland (who else?). "If anything," says Winner, "*Death Wish* prophesied what would happen when people feel the law isn't protecting them. It was ahead of its time. From the caveman days to today there have always been violent times. You can't say that the Middle Ages weren't violent, before television and films—so where do you put the blame then—oil paintings and books?"

TV SUPIE

A television special, based on the making of *Superman I*—"probably the most expensive feature ever made"—runs the hype—was snapped up by tv buyers at the massive tv market at Cannes. The show was made by a Swiss-based tv combine, Westonia, closely connected with one of the *Superman* producers, Alexander Salkind. The company was formed when Salkind ran into one Omar Kaczmarczyk in Paris in 1979. Despite his name, Kaczmarczyk is American and has worked in small-budget movies in Los Angeles. Westonia

owns the tv-rights to most of the Salkind's pre-*Superman* films, and shot the Supie special during the Richard Donner days. It includes various interviews with the stars and the special effects technicians. One of the interviews, with Marlon Brando, went on so long, it will be released as a separate tv production and has fuelled the notion for more similar in-depth profiles on Fellini, Jane Fonda and Clint Eastwood.

NEAT TEAMING

Broadway has pulled off a double act that Hollywood hadn't even thought of: *Alien's* Sigourney Weaver and *Star Trek's* Stephen Collins are together again (for the very first time) in the Christopher Durang comedy, *Beyond Therapy*.

QUICK TAKES

Adrienne Barbeau (actress wife of director John Carpenter) into *Swamp Thing* with French star Louis Jourdan

Prom Night's Paul Lynch now directing *The Graduation Party*, which sounds like *Prom Night* all over again, and probably is. Tony Maylam's revenge trip, *The Burning*, has won a big American release this month. Mexico's own Rene Cardona is in the thick of *Visitors from the Fourth Dimension*, about the living dead emerging from the seas. And over in Italy, Lucio Fulci is shooting *The House Outside the Cemetery*. Self advertised as "1981's most important horror film", *A Night to Remember*. Ugh! Hannah Gordon and Dame Wendy Hiller star in ITV's two-hour version of "one of the best authenticated ghost stories", *Miss Morrison's Ghost*, filmed in Versailles and Paris.

JAMIE'S GAME

Stacy Keach steals all the honours—the whole movie, in fact—from Jamie Lee Curtis in *Road Games*. This is an Australian film, from the American writer of *Herlequin* and *Patrick*, Everett DeRoche. And with his dialogue, no actor could fail in Keach's role of the guy driving a truck of pork from Melbourne to Perth (he doesn't like to call himself a truck-driver). On the road, he locates the killer of several women. Telling jokes, reciting poetry, making up anecdotes about the people in passing cars, Keach is terrific, with time to wholly flesh out his character. Jamie arrives mid-way through the proceedings, hitching a ride, as in *The Fog*, and joins in the word games and the chase until—what else?—she's sprinted away by the killer. Then, but no, See this one. It's good. Nearly great.

GLOVED

Another of Corman's *Bettle* stars, John Saxon, has a new movie out—*The Glove*. Saxon plays a modern bounty hunter chasing convict Rosey (that's Roosevelt Grier, yes, big Pam's big brother) who's running around town gloving people. His weapon is a glove made of five pounds of lead, invented by the cops as easier to use than a billy club or cattle-prod during campus riots. Might be worth picking up by some London distributor. Two could make a handsome double bill with Mike Caine's new shocker *Hand 'n' Glove*!

The Glove



STAGE SUPIE

Expected soon on the British tube, the two-hour tv version of the Broadway *Superman* musical. David Wilson is the fellow in the glasses and long-johns and Lesley Ann Warren is Lois Lane. Other background warblers include David Wayne (the original "Digger Dan" in *Dallas*), and M*A*S*H marvel, Loretta Swit

OMEN ENDS

After Alan Parker and Ridley Scott—enter another commercials director into the British feature fray. Graham Baker has the top job on *The Final Conflict*, which producer Harvey Bernhard refuses to call *Omen III*. But that's what it is. "The most terrifying movie of the 80s," adds Bernhard for good measure. Except, sorry people, it ain't. Maybe we're just too used to the doings of Damien Thorne by now, or we've had too much of the blood cult on screens in recent months. Suffice to say, *The Final Conflict* is not scary, only funny. Unintentionally so.

Damien, now played by New Zealand star Sam Neill (recommended by James Mason after Australia's *My Brilliant Career*) is okay, head now of Thorne Industries (not the one in partnership with Britain's EMI, I trust) and the US Ambassador at the Court of St James, no less. Lisa Harrow is easy on the eye, and ear, as the (oh no) television news girls. Rossano Brazzi makes a comeback as per Gregory Peck and William Holden in the other *Omens*; so does Hazel Court, in brief cameo. Hazel who goes back to the first Hammer *Freakenstein* in 1957, is married to Don Taylor who made *Damien—Omen II*. And in fact, made a better job of it as a three-time Clio winner for his commercials has preceded him to the pens of the American critics. One said, "It seems like he doesn't quite know what to do when the daggers don't have a brand-name to hold toward the camera or the dialogue stretches beyond two sentences." And no, that wasn't John Bosman!

MIKE'S MITT

Inflation has hit the special effects field, too. Carlo Rambaldi, the Italian sculptor and movie mechanical-animator, is no longer tackling such vast orders as *King Kong* and *Puck*, the chief alien in *CE3K*. His latest assignment is smaller, but no less difficult. He created *The Hand*, for Mike Caine's latest horror-trip. Caine's role? A cartoonist who loses a hand in an accident. Does he? As the ad copy phrases it: "It has no brain, but it can

THINGS TO COME

think. It has no soul, but it can live forever. It strikes without warning." Well, you've been warned... The film stems from Marc Brandel's book, *The Lizard's Tail*, and is produced by Edward R. Pressman, who spent so many years trying to get *Conan* off the drawing-board. His director is one of the *Conan* writers, Oliver Stone.

MONEY TRAP

Altar The Hand, Mike Caine has more thrills headed our way in the Sidney Lumet film of Ira Levin's international hit play, *Deathtrap*. In London, this starred just about everyone from sch-y-u-know-who, William Franklin, to ex-Avenger, Garath Hunt. Caine's co-stars include Super Chris Reeve, Dyan Cannon and Irene Worth. Warner Brothers shelled out \$1.5 million for the rights. Cheap at the price. The Broadway production has now become the longest-running thriller on the New York stage, beating the wartime record of *Angel Street's* 1,296 performances. It's also the most profitable play, this side of anything by Neil Simon—earning its backers a 335% return on their original investment.

VAMPIRES TO GO...

After being announced as a Cannon film two, three—or was it four years ago?—the Hollywood film version of Colin Wilson's novel, *Vampires*, is finally on the launch pad. Producers Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus have named several potential directors in the past (including Golan himself once upon a time). But their last named is staying aboard—Zoran Perisic, the man behind the Zoptic System which helped Superman (and the rest) to fly. George Pappard fresh from his comeback triumph in *Corman's Battle Beyond the Stars*, will top the cast of the \$6-million produr fun, with 'three other international stars' still being sought. I shall, no doubt, hear more about them when meeting Messrs Golan and Globus at the Cannes festival. Incidentally, the movie is now titled *Space Intruders*.

GENRE SWITCH

"Audience involvement and telling a story is the key—you can't patronise

the audiences." So guess who's talking... ? One of the move-brats, for instance, or a veteran like a Zinnerman or Ritt? Nope! Those words are our choice for quote of the month from Sean S. Cunningham, who patronised the hell out of a gullible public with his blood-spattered rubbish, *Friday the 13th*. He made that one for \$500,000 (like Carpenter's *Halloween*) and it has earned around \$32-million worldwide. Success, of course, does odd things to some people's heads, or maybe Cunningham has been reading Carpenter's view on genre movies. Whatever the reason, he has put his blood-capsules away for *A Stranger is Watching*, a \$3.5 million suspense thriller with Rip Torn and Kate (Mrs Columbo) Mulgrew. "I was offered everything to do the *Friday the 13th* sequel," he says, "but I've already made that film. With *Stranger*, I'm getting out of the low budget horror genre..." His future plans takes him further away, with a love story and then a musical, before starring Kristy McNichol as *The Witness*. Unless he changes his views yet again.

GENRE SWITCH II

Cunningham may not be doing it, but the guys who made *When A Stranger Calls* are. The new movie from producers Barry Krost and Doug Chaplin is called ... are you ready for this... *Thursday the 12th*. A comedy!

FELINE FOLK

The word from the set of the *Cat People* re-make in New Orleans is that we can expect more fantasy and sexual happenings than in Val Lewton's 1942 original. The word is not so surprising (well, the fantasy is) as Paul Schrader, the *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* scenarist, is directing from his own reworked scenario... about a stunning Yugoslav girl believing she can metamorphosis into a partner. Nastassja Kinski, Polanski's *Teletubby*, plays the woman, with two British co-stars—Malcolm McDowell and John Hurt. Plus John Heard and Annette O'Toole. Whatever else Schrader does, I trust he'll follow director Jacques Tourneur's excellent (or money-saving) example and refrain from showing his monster. Tourneur did it all with camera angles and great sound effects... but I somehow doubt that Hollywood thinks modern audiences will buy that. Pity. The greatest horror films, after all, are in your own head.

TITLE CHANGE

If you're a collector of title switches, here's a real lulu for you. Alfrad Sole's 1977 New York horror movie, which started life as *Communion* and played

in Britain under that name... but later went out on American release as *Alice, Sweet Alice*... has lately been re-issued over there as *Holy Terror*. Holy moly! Nothing like trying to kid the ticket-buyers: it's a new Brooke Shields movie when it's really her first



OLD SEEDS

It's taken close on a full decade for *Seeds of Evil* to win an American release. It was hardly worth the wait. Filmed in Puerto Rico as *The Gardener* in 1972, writer-director Jim Kay's blessedly short (81 minutes) horror item features the Warholian Joe Dallesandro as a guy with green fingers and a succession of rapidly dying-off clients. It's Joe's orchids, you see. And his other flowers. They, well, kill people. They don't do a lot for Joe, either. He finished up as a human tree. Dr. Closa as an obviously showy string-effects-budget could make him look like a planted trunk. Actually, that's not so difficult. Joe... He always was a very wooden performer. Co-stars include Rita Gam and Katherine Houghton, Katherine Hepburn's niece, and her "daughter" in *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* (1967).

GREAT SCOTTS

Look out Warners, the Scott brothers have arrived in Hollywood... Ridley is completing *Blade Runner* in Los Angeles with Harrison Ford and the Dutch star Rutger Hauer (excellent in *Nighthawks*). And Tony Scott has won a Paramount deal to make *Fire on the Mountain*, another of the movies being rushed to avoid the directors' strike.

Man in overall charge of *Blade Runner*, by the way, knows Harrison Ford rather well. He's Charles J. Weber, who resigned as president and chief executive officer of George Lucas' Lucasfilm when George moved his office out of LA. Weber's new job is exec vice-president of the film and tv combines, Tandem Productions and TAT Communications. Doug Trumbull is in charge of Scott's visual effects.

After nearly three years in the making and the biggest budget ever afforded a Ray Harryhausen feature, *Clash of the Titans* finally arrives with as much media hype and merchandising accessories as *Star Wars*. I was looking forward to the film tremendously after the disappointment of *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, Ray's previous Dynamation spectacular.

Sad to say though, *Clash* just misses the boat and in many ways makes nonsense of the secrecy with which the film was surrounded during its production. *Clash* has no secrets, it is once more a tale of a boy meets girl, loses girl, defeats monster and regains girl. To be honest, I feel that *Clash of the Titans* is a deliberate attempt on the producers' behalf to capture the same audience as *Star Wars*, without offering any of the entertainment value of the Lucas film.

Clash is the story of Perseus and Andromeda (quite engagingly played by Harry Hamlin and Judy Bowker) and the various perils put in their path by the fickle gods of Olympus.

In many ways, the film is reminiscent of *Jason and the Argonauts* and despite what Ray Harryhausen told me in the interview in this issue, the two films can be compared. Even more, I would suggest that *Clash of the Titans* tries to recapture the spirit of *Jason*. There are several points in the film where it comes close, but isolated scenes don't add up to much in a film running two hours.

For me, *Clash of the Titans* fails as a film because its dramatic structure is so unsound. This, of course, could be because the myths on which it is based suffer from the same problems. Despite the crash course in the subject which MGM issues with every press kit on the film, it's an area that I'm not interested in and that the average person who wants to see the film won't be conversant with.

The animation of the various creatures is very good and well up to Ray's usual standard and the contributions of Jim Danforth and Steven Archer, Harryhausen's protege, are

CLASH OF THE TITANS



Above: Perseus (Harry Hamlin) and his three faithful though un-named followers prepare to make their attack on the temple of the gorgon, Medusa. Above right: Calibos (Nell McCarthy), prince of the swamps, whose hideous appearance is a result of a curse by Zeus, who wanted to punish Calibos' mother.

also remarkable. In particular, the roping and capture of Pegasus, the last of the flying horses, is well done—a combination of the talents of Harryhausen and Danforth.

Steven Archer's major contribution is something else though. Beautifully animated perhaps, but Bubo the mechanical owl becomes, within minutes, a great pain in the neck. Within seconds of his introduction, at least two people sitting near me at the

screening commented, "R2 Bubo!" And it is. The damn thing arrives on the scene and instantly emits a series of squeaks and mechanical burps just like you-know-who and promptly falls flat on its face. A later scene has it falling in a pond and tracing a series of bubbles around the surface of the water. Despite whatever misgivings I may hold about Bubo, it does mark the professional debut of a promising new stop



THE TITANS



Below, left to right: *The Gods of Mount Olympus*, led by Zeus (Lawrence Olivier). Perseus (Harry Hamlin) clutches the head of Medusa gingerly. The playwright Ammon (Burgess Meredith) makes a startling entrance. One of the Stygian witches (in this case Flora Robson). A portrait of Harry Hamlin as Perseus.

motion animator in Steve Archer.

All the other creatures deserve a mention of course—there wouldn't have been a *Clash of the Titans* if it weren't for Harryhausen. The giant scorpions are well-animated, although badly matched against background plates and the scene is little more than men poking sticks at monsters.

Other *by-the-way* creatures include a giant vulture which bears more than a passing

resemblance to the two headed Roc in *Seventh Voyage* and Diomedes the two-headed wolf/dog, guardian of Medusa's temple. The vulture is quite well-conceived and animated, but Diomedes is something of a disappointment, really lacking ferocity and the stiffness of some of the animation doesn't really help. As with nearly all recent Harryhausen creatures, both lack character.

The other two animated characters are

something else however. Calibos is a combination of animation and actor Neil McCarthy and for the most part, the different footage is well integrated, although a fight with Perseus is somewhat unconvincing in several shots when a live Harry Hamlin wrestles with an animated Calibos. But where the Calibos scenes gain is on the amount of sympathy built up for the character and though much of this is due to McCarthy's performance in the close-ups, the animated Calibos generates quite a bit of its own.

However, the best single sequence in the film is Perseus' encounter with Medusa. After a somewhat hoary crossing of the river Styx and the battle with Diomedes, Perseus and his men enter the temple of the snake woman. Medusa is a truly evil creation and the claustrophobic temple confines, lit by flaming torches and peopled by the men she has turned to stone, generate a feeling of genuine horror. But more, it shows what Harryhausen can do with stop-motion. It is the only sequence that comes close to capturing any sense of wonder in the entire two hours.

One final word on the special effects. It is well known that Ray Harryhausen has an aversion to the type of modern technology developed in the last few years by the likes of Trumbull, Dykstra and the gang at Industrial Light and Magic. That's a pity, because it's progress and one shouldn't look down on that, for *Clash of the Titans* contains some of the shoddiest optical work to be seen on the screen in the last ten years. Blue fringing abounds in the travelling mattes, registration is out on several background plates and the effects scenes have a graininess which detracts from the action.

Having said all that against the film, I would like to point out that all the children in the audience seemed engrossed and the ten-year-old who accompanied me liked it unreservedly. And that's probably what *Clash of the Titans* is all about. It's a film for children, not film critics.

Review by Phil Edwards



THE FAN

There's a famous Hollywood story about actor Richard Chamberlain who, while he was still television's Dr Kildare, received a fan letter that said: "I've been writing to you for medical advice and all I keep getting back are 8 x 10 glossies. If this doesn't stop I'll have to come to the studio". As amusing as this sounds, it ceases to be so when one learns that a girl was later found hiding in the bushes at MGM waiting for him with a butcher's knife. It is this darker side of fan worship, the fan who literally wants to love you to death, that made Bob Randall's book *The Fan* a best-seller a couple of years back. Now the film version is with us, complete with a disclaimer that it was made before any letters starting "Dear Jodie Foster" or any record album hurriedly signed by John Lennon outside his apartment block in New York. And *The Fan* is going to need all of the crass publicity it can get because it's not only a dud, it's insultingly bad—a styleless exercise in bargin-basement Brian de Palma.

Sally Ross (*Lauren Bacall*) is a famous actress rehearsing for her Broadway musical debut. Douglas Breen (*Michael Behn*) is her "most adoring fan" who gets angrier every time his love letters are answered by her secretary, Belle Goldman (*Maureen Stapleton*). His anger turning to hate, he viciously attacks Belle with a razor in a subway and jealously mutilates Ms Ross' dancing partner in a swimming pool. After her maid is killed in her apartment she realises just how vulnerable she is and just



Review by Alan Jones



There's nothing more depressing in the cinema than a bad comedy and boy is this one a depressing experience. Almost nothing in it works as it should do and after you start feeling embarrassed for the cast and their energetic but vain efforts to breathe life into a picture that died shortly after the opening scenes. It's particularly sad to see the late Rachel Roberts clowning so desperately to no avail in what turned out to be her final appearance...

Charlie Chan sets out to be a wild and wacky comedy along the lines of, say, a Mel Brooks movie; but never once accomplishes the proper mood of easy absurdity which is essential for this type of

thing. Instead the humour is forced and strained and the overall atmosphere is a leaden one. Part of the blame must lie with Clive Donner's direction—he seems to either mis-time or mishandle every joke, especially the visual ones. Take the sequence where Charlie Chan's grandson, Lee Chan Jr (*Richard Hatch*) causes chaos to erupt as he walks through a Chinatown street in San Francisco—this is so unimaginatively and flatly staged and shot that there is no humour in it whatsoever. Even Peter Bogdanovich, another director who has an overly self-conscious approach to slapstick, was much more successful when he did this same sequence in his 1972 movie *What's Up, Doc?* in the same Chinatown-



San Francisco setting

But the real fault lies with the overall conception behind the movie. It's clear that the writers, all three of them, after getting the idea of doing a parody of the old *Charlie Chan* films, didn't have a clue about what to do with it. For a start, just how do you go about parodying Charlie Chan? For a parody to be successful your audience must be fairly familiar with the subject of your parody but how many people have seen a *Charlie Chan* movie recently? (possibly they're still running on the *Late Late Show* in America but not in Britain). And what is there to parody in Charlie Chan apart from his white suit, his pseudo-Chinese euphemisms (e.g. "Murder weapon is like Mother-in-



when she, and the police, think it's safe for her to go back into the theatre, the Fan turns up backstage on her opening night wielding a switchblade.

Readers of the book will find that the ending has been changed. Obviously a star of Ms Bacall's stature wouldn't have accepted the part otherwise, but did the makers really have to have her making a ridiculous speech about violence and terrorism as Breen crumbles before her? It is a transparently cheap effort to get some sort of socially redeeming message across and in the context of all that has gone before, a crude and ridiculous attempt by the Robert Stigwood Organisation to pretend they are making something more than an up-market stalk-and-slash saga.

There is also the question of why Ms Bacall made the film in the first place. Had she known that make-up wizard Dick Smith would be called in during post-production to add blood and gore effects, I think she might have changed her mind. Ironically though, as two-dimensional as her character is, she is the only reason for bothering to see the film at all. In that respect it's almost a throwback to those countless shockers faded Hollywood actresses like Bette Davis and Joan Crawford used to star in in the early 1960s. Pino Donaggio's music score adds further to the illusion of a cut-price *Dressed to Kill*, but Edward Bianchi's film is about as subtle as a sledgehammer. It needed the wit and humour of a Hitchcock or a De Palma to make it a

terrifying edge-of-the-seat experience. Instead you watch it uninvolved and unmoved which is all the more surprising when you consider how good the original subject matter is. *The Fan* is not only tensionless, it's artless too and its contempt for the audience is its most disturbing element.

Thanks, but no thanks—I'll get my fright fix elsewhere.

The Fan (1981)

Lauren Bacall (as Sally Rossi), James Garner (as Jake Berman), Maureen Stapleton (as Belle Goldman), Hector Elizondo (as Ralph Andrews), Michael Biehn (as Douglas Breen), Anna Maria Horsford (as Emily Stoltz), Kurt Johnson (as David Branum), Faye Martinez (as Elsa), Reed Jones (as choreographer), Kauilani Lee (as Douglas' sister), Charles Blackwell (as John Vetta), Dwight Schultz (as director), Lesley Rogers (as Heidi).

Directed by Edward Bianchi, Screenplay by Priscilla Chapman and John Hartwell from the novel by Bob Randall, Designed by Santo Loquasto, Director of photography Dick Bush, Edited by Alan Heim, Music by Pino Donaggio, "Hearts not Diamonds" and "A Remarkable Woman" by Marvin Hamlisch and Tim Rice, Musical staging and choreography by Arleen Phillips, Associate producer John Nicotella and Bill Oakes, Executive producer Kevin McCormick, Produced by Robert Stigwood. Time: 95 mins

Cert: X

Review by John Brosnan

CHAN

Dragon Queen

Law: both very herd to get nd of . . ." end his over-eager Number One son? Not much at all, so as a result that's all we get from the makers of *Charlie Chan and the Dragon Queen* . . .

There is a half-hearted attempt to relate it to the old movies by the use of a black and white opening sequence but it doesn't work because there's no difference in style between this and the rest of the film (Ustinov plays Chan in both sections, for instance). So because Chan himself doesn't offer much as a subject for parody there is little of him in the movie which has to be peddled out with a great deal of strained, inconsequential material like the long and boring chase sequence in the middle



involving several hansom cabs, horses and a police car.

Much of the responsibility for carrying the picture is pushed onto the shoulders of Richard Hatch (from *Battlestar Galactica*) who plays the bumbling grandson. He tries hard but, understandably, he can't perform miracles while handicapped with a script that should have been towed out to see and sunk. The rest of the cast have nothing much to do but stand around acting silly or bizarre, or both. Angie Dickinson as the Dragon Lady is completely wasted—all she gets to do is run around in a series of voluminous costumes. As the witty Alan Jones quipped afterwards: "This time she was over-dressed to kill . . ."

The film this most closely resembles is *The Deadly Plot of Fa Manchu*—another so-called parody of a character with limited potential for parody (the Fu Manchu books would make a marvellous target for parody but the audience would have to know the books well to get the jokes). Both movies must have seemed great ideas at the time of conception but when their respective makers came to the point of actually writing the scripts they discovered that one good idea can't be stretched into a feature film. But they went ahead and tried anyway. Unfortunately

IRVINE ON EFFECTS

Two films that make their debut this month rely heavily on the strength of their special effects to put their stories across. Interestingly, the films are aimed at opposite ends of the market and seem to succeed in their respective fields. BBC Visual Effects Designer Mat Irvine casts a critical eye over the special effects of both films.

Two films couldn't have been more different, yet *Clash of the Titans* and *Altered States* are linked by those arbitrary definitions fantasy and/or sf. It's probably fair to say that they both relied on their special effects, if not entirely, then for a large proportion of the screen time.

It is very difficult for anyone tied up in any aspect of the industry to look on other examples of the art in a completely passive manner. I tend to get sore ribs and hissed at loudly with comments such as "shut up! I don't want to know the Jawas' transporter is only 2 feet high" or "I don't care if you can see a wire, I can't". With *Altered States* though I don't think I was even aware of all the effects. It's about the nearest thing to a total audio-visual experience I've come across since 2001, and I never thought I'd say that. Admittedly, it's a completely different type of film, but the way the images and (what is equally important) the sound track, are linked together reminded me very much of the grand-daddy of all modern sf films. Thankfully the viewing was in a modern theatre with a decent print and 6 channel sound. I can't imagine what it will look like and sound like in your normal local picture palace. (I can imagine, but it's all too horrible). I strongly recommend travelling to a properly equipped cinema if you want the full benefit.

Even in these days of ultra-sophisticated effects, some of the techniques in *Altered States* are new. Particularly Bran Ferren's contributions, using computer-produced mattes and then computer-enhanced images to fill the matthes. Very simply, the computer is shown, via Rotoscoping, what image within a frame is needed as a matte, and then it "just" scans the sequence, following the image. The final impression virtually obliterates the special make-up and costumes painstakingly produced by make-up wizard Dick Smith, but like so many special effects sequences in so many films and television, a heck of a lot of effort has to go into producing a single second of screen time.

Nowhere is this more so in stop-frame animation, where, if you're doing a second a day, that's rushing things a bit!

Clash of the Titans, being a Ray Harryhausen co-production, not surprisingly involves animation for



a good percentage of the time. The film, a mythological epic, introduces us to an animated Pegasus, Medusa, Kraken, Calibos, several scorpions and a mechanical owl named Bubo that tends to steal the show and sounds like a cross between R2-D2 and Tiny Clanger. Ray Harryhausen shared the animation effects with Jim Danforth (*When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, *The 7 Faces of Doctor Lao*) and newcomer Steve Archer producing what we now regard as the normal range of fantastic creatures. Some worked better than others, the scenes with Medusa in particular were extremely effective. Calibos, the monster prince, was also well done, especially the intercutting between the made-up actor—Neil McCarthy—and the animation. Some scenes were spoilt by what is really bad process photography, not a fault of the animation at all. On many occasions where a foreground animation had been put into the back-

ground, presumably via blue screen travelling matte, the foreground and background prints were of different generations, showing up the join where it shouldn't have been apparent. If the background couldn't have been done as a higher quality print at least the animated foreground should have been degraded to match. In addition, one particular city scene showed an incredibly bad matte where the film looked as if it was one complete sprocket out of sync in the optical printer. However, if you can forgive these few glitches, the rest of the effects come out well. The mixing of live-action and miniatures, however they are achieved, is not the easiest of accomplishments. Actors fighting non-existent opponents, or rather opponents that will arrive via an optical printer 6 months later can't have an easy task. The fight between Perseus and Calibos—real and miniature—is very convincing.



Top: Clash of the Titans. Above: The whirlpool effects from Altered States.

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EXCALIBUR

Review by Phil Edwards



After nearly twenty years John Boorman's film of *Excalibur* is at last a reality. It has been, most definitely, worth the wait.

The legend of Merlin, King Arthur and the court of Camelot has been told on the screen many times. From over-produced musicals to Disney cartoon features to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. However, Boorman's masterpiece must surely become the yardstick by which future versions of the fable will be measured.

Despite adverse criticism from some quarters the fact remains that *Excalibur* has made a vast fortune in America, which is testament to Boorman's skill as a film-maker. Every frame of the film shines with the director's love of the project and it is remarkable what Boorman has achieved on a relatively small budget.

But while *Excalibur* is simply stunning to look at, there are times when Boorman's meagre budget does show through. Camelot is reduced to what looks like a lump of silver paper in the long shots and occasionally the battle scenes seemed to need a few more extras to give them a greater depth of scope. But these minor quibbles don't really mar the overall production values of the film.

The production design of Tony Pratt is visually gorgeous, and one wonders what he would have done with *Thongor* had that ill-fated

production ever happened. For *Excalibur* he has created a dream world of glittering armour and beautiful costumes and the few interior sets range from the mysterious passages of castles to the depths of Merlin's lair deep beneath Camelot.

The thread which binds *Excalibur* together is the character of Merlin, a truly superb performance by Nicol Williamson. It is Merlin who weaves a spell which allows Uther Pendragon (*Gabriel Byrne*) to seduce the bride of his ally, Cornwall (*Corin Redgrave*). The result of that union is Arthur whom Merlin takes as his own.

Williamson plays Merlin not as a traditional pointy-capped magician but as a clever, cunning sorcerer aware that the days of magic are nearly over and that his own days as a manipulator of men are numbered. It is this aspect of the film which affected me the most. *Excalibur* is about the end of magic and the time when supernatural forces played a great part in the everyday affairs of men. And so, in some respects it is also about the loss of innocence, symbolised by the return of the sword Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake.

Excalibur is also an action-epic, so don't expect a long, lyrical ode to the days of Camelot. Its extraordinary length (it runs somewhere near two and a half hours) accommodates a wealth of incident, action and detail though I can't remember when a film has engrossed me

quite so much.

The battle scenes, though devoid of physical numbers, have an intensity that is often frightening and claustrophobic and there are generous helpings of severed limbs and bloodletting to keep even demanding youngsters happy, though the film has an AA certificate. There is some nudity, though not as much as *Clash of the Titans*, and in a way it is interesting to compare the two films. *Clash* is totally devoid of any sense of wonder, whereas *Excalibur* is positively brimming over with these qualities.

Undoubtedly the difference is the love with which the two films were made. *Clash* looks and feels like a marketing exercise whereas *Excalibur* is made with a warmth for the subject. It is this warmth and love which pulls the film over some rough moments in the script, and to a large degree one has to be able to empathise with what Boorman is trying to do. *Excalibur* can be regarded as a personal epic, a humanising of mythological figures and on this level the film works superbly, aided by some remarkable performances.

Nigel Terry has probably the most difficult job and makes Arthur a believable and human figure rather than the hero of previous versions of the tale. Helen Mirren's Morgana is pure evil, though is reduced to something less than she sees herself when confronted by the superior magic of Merlin.

UR



Other performances are equally accomplished, particularly Nicholas Clay as Lancelot and Paul Geoffrey as Perceval, the knight who discovers the secret of the Holy Grail.

For me, John Boorman is Merlin, a weaver of cinematic spells. *Excalibur* is his most potent concoction to date, using modern film technology to tell a story of human weaknesses and strengths, set against a backdrop of magic and wonder.



Opposite: King Arthur (Richard Gere) and his offspring by his secret wife, Morgan le Fay (Cheri Lee). Above: Nicholas Clay as Lancelot; "You're Belated," says the knight to his son, William (William Moseley), in a scene from *Excalibur*. Below: King Arthur (Gere) and his sister, Morgan (Lee), in a moment of purpose in life away from his secret liaison. King Arthur/Merlin/Lancelot and the world they have created between them. (all photos: MGM)



EXCALIBUR

Review by John Brosnan

Watching *Excalibur* at the preview screening was like being in an aeroplane diving at high speed towards a mountain. You kept praying that the pilot would pull out of the dive before it was too late but a third of the way into the movie I knew there was no way of avoiding that mountain and the collision came shortly afterwards. It was then that I realized *Excalibur*, in which I'd hoped to soar into the heavens, wasn't Concorde but a dodo.

I tried to like it—I really did—because I had such high hopes for it. And when the titters started early on I just dismissed them as the mindless reaction of a cynical preview audience composed of silly trendies who didn't appreciate what the director John Boorman was trying to do. Didn't they realize, I muttered to myself, that this was *Art*? This was your honest-to-goodness, pure mythology up there on the screen—none of your watered-down rubbish with Hobbits and Yodas getting underfoot. This was the genuine article. Okay, admittedly Nicol Williamson as Merlin seemed to be having a bad day (or several, in fact) but I was sure the sheer visual power of the movie would overcome this handicap. But before long I was tittering away with the rest of them...

Excalibur is an embarrassment, and the blame must fall on Boorman who not only produced and directed it but also co-wrote the screenplay with Roscoe Pallenberg. I have come to the conclusion that Boorman is one of those directors who should be physically restrained from laying a finger on the screenplays of his movies. His undoubted talents as a visual artist just don't extend to his screenplay writing. In fact they fall short by a good two or three light years.

A look at his previous movies will confirm this—the best of them, *Point Blank* and *Deliverance*, were based on novels whereas the others, *Lao the Last*, *Hell in the Pacific*, *Zardoz* and *Exorcist II: The Heretic* were all based on original screenplays in which Boorman had an increasing hand in the writing. Thanks to the novels *Point Blank* and *Deliverance* have solid narrative flow, but Boorman's other movies tend to be formless and undisciplined. The worst of these is *Zardoz* which Boorman wrote all by himself. *Zardoz*, like *Excalibur*, has some marvellous visual set-pieces but it is a self-indulgent shambles full of pomposity and pretentiousness (not everyone agrees with this verdict—recently a critic described it as "the only truly intellectual science fiction film ever made").

Exorcist II: The Heretic is another movie full of brilliant moments that fail to add up to a cohesive whole. Though William Goodheart receives the sole writing credit on this, Barbara Pallenberg's book on the making of the movie reveals that Boorman abandoned Goodheart's script and rewrote it with Roscoe Pallenberg who is credited as *Creative Associate* as well as 2nd Unit Director (Pallenberg had previously worked with Boorman on *Deliverance*). You can see, on the strength of *The Heretic* and *Excalibur*, why Pallenberg and Boorman get on so well together as a writing team—neither likes their work to be hampered by such old fashioned things as dramatic structure.

But it's the banality of much of the dialogue in *Excalibur* that's so depressing. It all looks lovely up there on the screen until the actors open their mouths (after opening their visors) and then suddenly all that beautiful imagery goes for nought. The words just can't compete with the visuals and as the film proceeds the gap between the two



grows insurmountable. I finally decided it would have been better if all the dialogue had been in French, or some other foreign language, without subtitles. At least it would have sounded as if it meant something.

Doing it in French would have also solved the problem of Nicol Williamson's funny voice. I still can't figure out what he was up to. Why, at some time during the shooting, didn't Boorman take Williamson aside and quietly say: "Nic, old lad, what's with the funny voice?" Or was it Boorman's own idea to have him speak in that strange way, putting the emphasis on the wrong words in practically every line? Did someone have a brainstorm and decide that Merlin was actually the Wandering Jew (after all, both are immortal)? Was that why Williamson occasionally sounded like he was doing a bad imitation of Fagin in the musical *Oliver!*? Answers on a Silver Grail please.

A film that seems to have been a source of major inspiration to Boorman is Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac* which is also based on Arthurian legend but is a much more oblique version (so oblique that all the battles are filmed at knee level). The main device that Boorman has borrowed from Bresson is the use of the armour—in *Excalibur*, as in *Lancelot du Lac*, the knights live in their amour, wearing it indoors and out, and not even removing it for some rather intimate actions (the exception is Lancelot who strips off at the drop of a gauntlet, but then he is French). All of which is used to symbolise the attitudes of men who are trapped in a rigid, implacable code of behaviour that doesn't permit

them to express themselves as individuals or even to acknowledge the fact they are made of mere flesh and blood.

In the early scenes the armour is dark and gnarled, suggesting dinosaurs who are blindly fighting each other even though it means they are heading for extinction—but once Arthur unites them in a common cause the amour changes shape and colour becoming lighter and more radiant though still serving to keep the knights depersonalized.

I suppose one has to admire Boorman for trying to produce a completely straight film version of the King Arthur legend that makes few concessions to contemporary cinematic fashions (apart from some realistic gore in the battle sequences). He courageously refuses to present the characters in *Excalibur* as living human beings, and thus make them more palatable to modern audiences. Instead they remain nothing but walking-talking symbols throughout the film and therefore true to their mythic origins. But I'm afraid I found 2 hours and 20 minutes of watching symbols go through their predictable paces a very boring experience (and I've got to admit I found Bresson's version boring too).

However, as usual, I appear to be in the minority. At the time of writing *Excalibur* is proving to be a big box office hit in America and apparently hordes of young stars are returning for a second viewing, some dressed in home-made amour, so obviously it's struck some sort of chord with the audiences. But just why I can't figure out.



EXCALIBUR
Produced by John Boorman
Directed by John Boorman
Written by John Boorman and Terry Jones
Music by Trevor Jones
Cinematography by Alex Thompson
Edited by John Merritt
Production design by Anthony Pratt
Costumes by Bob Ringwood
Special effects by Peter Hutchings and Alan Whibley
Executive producer Michael Dryhurst
Associate producers Edgar P. Gross and Robert A. Eisenstein



Excalibur (1981)

Nigel Terry as King Arthur, Helen Mirren (Morgan), Nicholas Clay (Lancelot), Cherie Lunghi (Guinevere), Alan Alda (Perceval), Nicol Williamson (Percival), Robert Addie (Merlin), David Warner (Arthur), Buckley Iury (Gawain), Charles Boorman (Gawain), Liam Neeson (Gawain), Colin Radford (Rowallan), Niall O'Brien (Kay), Ian Stewart (Leonidas), Clive Smith (Ormal), Clarin Hindi (Lot), Liam O'Callaghan (Sadok), Michael Muldoon (Astolat), Charles Boorman (Boy Merlin).

Produced and directed by John Boorman, screenplay by Kenji Paffenberg and John Boorman, Production design by Anthony Pratt, Director of photography Alex Thompson, Edited by John Merritt, Music composed and conducted by Trevor Jones, Costumes designed by Bob Ringwood, Fight arranger William Hobbs, Make-up Paul Newall, Special effects by Peter Hutchings and Alan Whibley, Arthur by Terry Jones, Special optical effects Wally Veevers, Associate producer Michael Dryhurst, Executive producers Edgar P. Gross and Robert A. Eisenstein.





Left: Michael Crawford stars as cartoonist-turned-CIA-agent Woody Wilkins. Below left: The Condorcar is pursued by a team of six assassins helmed by a sadistic KGB, one of which is tragically demolished (below) in a spectacular fashion.



CONDORMAN



Left: Michael Crawford in the Condorman costume. Right: Barbara Carrera as the KGB defector Natalia. Below: The KGB do not give up easily and the chase continues on water, with Condorman piloting his high-power hydroplane-style Condor Craft.



Coming soon from Walt Disney Productions. Condorman is a spoof of both the Bond series and of the Superman movies rolled into one. Michael Crawford is back in perhaps his most familiar type of role as the bumbling comic strip artist who unwittingly convinces a KGB agent that he is with the CIA. The KGB operative, Natalia (Barbara Carrera) decides to defect and informs the US authorities that she will deal only with the great Condorman. Wilkins is hastily kitted out with all the paraphernalia that goes with the character and is despatched to aid Natalia in her defection.

Unfortunately for Wilkins, the KGB is represented by Kirov (Oliver Reed) who discovers the defection attempt and brings all the might of the Soviet secret service to bear to destroy both Wilkins and Natalia.

ALTERED STATES

John Brosnan
reviews the latest
film from Ken
Russell, a study of
the effects of sensory
deprivation and
hallucinogenic drugs.





Opposite top left: Eddie Jessup (William Hurt) is seen floating serenely in a sensory deprivation tank in the opening sequence of the picture. Opposite top right: During one session in the tank Jessup is removed by Arthur Rosenberg (Bob Balaban) and Mason Parrish (Charles Haid), his mouth bleeding and his vocal chords paralysed. Opposite centre: During the shattering climax of the film, Jessup metamorphoses into a bizarre future being with spectacular but uncontrollable mental powers. Opposite: Emily Jessup (Blair Brown) is transformed by her husband when she tries to help him. Above left: Jessup tries to convince Rosenberg and Parrish that he has undergone a physical transformation while in the tank. Above: A portrait of William Hurt as Eddie Jessup. Left: Eddie Jessup and his wife Emily, wink out of existence temporarily in the stunning climax of *Altered States*.

Altered States has already been described as the "2001 of the 1980s" and I think the description is justified. Both movies deal with a search for the Ultimate Truth but where Kubrick's version ends on a note of enigma Ken Russell's protagonist actually comes back with an answer: "The Final Truth is that there is no Final Truth," he tells his understandably frazzled wife (they've both been through a lot by this stage of the film).

Now the answer may seem a little glib considering the tremendous build-up to this moment—it's as if the astronaut in 2001 returned to Earth to announce that the aliens had arrived for the purpose of opening up a chain of fast-food takeaways across the planet—but that's always the problem with any work that attempts to come to terms with any of the Ultimate Mysteries of the Universe. It's the same problem that mystics have when they try to describe their inner states of mind during a mystical experience—the very act of translating states of so-called "cosmic awareness" reduces them to the trite and commonplace. Words are inadequate tools in communicating the extremes of the emotional spectrum which is why the cinema has an advantage over literature in this area and why Altered States works best when Russell is showing what the protagonist, Dr Eddie Jessup, is experiencing then when Jessup is later interpreting what he felt and What It All Means.

Like 2001, Altered States is a total cinematic experience that aims to work directly on the emotions but at the same time, again like 2001, it doesn't insult the

intelligence while doing so (unlike Close Encounters which is all surface gloss but intellectually hollow, just like the Mothership itself). The launching pad for this flight into the mystical Unknown has been carefully constructed around a solid and convincing scientific rationale.

And it really is refreshing to hear scientists in a movie speaking not the usual pseudoscientific gobbledegook invented by some Hollywood scriptwriter who doesn't know an atom from a molecule but genuine scientific gobbledegook! The scientists in Altered States talk like real scientists do when two or more of them get together—it's a private language and is almost exclusively concerned with their work.

The credit for this must go to Paddy Chayefsky, the author of the original novel (a veteran tv and film scriptwriter, he was previously best known for such films as Marty, Hospital, and Network).

Chayefsky not only did an immense amount of research in the areas of anthropology, physiology, quantum physics and the latest studies into the nature of human consciousness but also spent a considerable time in the company of scientists familiarising himself with their jargon and their attitudes towards their work. Actually I think the novel contains too much of the results of this research—Chayefsky loads his readers up with more information than they really need in order to understand what is going on—but wisely Russell has cut out much of this in the movie, leaving only enough to provide the story with sufficient scientific authenticity.

In all other respects Ken Russell has been remarkably faithful to the novel, even to the point of keeping his usual cinematic idiosyncrasies firmly under control. In fact, for a Ken Russell movie it is remarkably restrained, in spite of the literally mind-boggling subject matter. Which makes it all the harder to understand why Chayefsky fell out with Russell during the making of the picture and insisted that his name be removed from the credits (the screenplay is now credited to Sydney Aaron which is Chayefsky's pseudonym). Very few novelists, in fact, have had their work treated so respectfully by a film maker so it's hard to see what Chayefsky has to complain about.

As in the novel the film follows the cosmic odyssey of a young scientist, Dr Eddie Jessup (excellently portrayed by William Hurt) who is obsessed with discovering nothing less than the Meaning of Life. Aided by an enthusiastic colleague, Arthur Rosenberg (Bob Balaban from Close Encounters) he begins experimenting with a sensory deprivation chamber and becomes convinced that the hallucinations he experiences inside the chamber are evidence of untapped reservoirs of knowledge within the human consciousness. But his experiments reach a temporary dead end and a number of years pass before he is able to continue.

In the meantime he meets and marries, almost offhandedly, a beautiful anthropologist called Emily (Blair Brown, also excellent and who reminds me of Genevieve Bujold). They have two children but Emily comes to realize that Eddie's obsession consumes him totally and that she



and the children are mere phantoms in his private world. They break up, amicably, and she goes to do field work in Africa for a year or so.

During this period Eddie visits Mexico where he experiments with an Indian hallucinatory drug that he believes has the power to unlock the eons of history locked in the atoms of every one of us. He hopes that it might eventually enable him to journey all the way back through time to the very moment of the creation of the Universe.

After obtaining access to another isolation tank he continues with his experiments, again with the help of Rosenberg but against the advice of another scientific colleague, Dr Mason Parrish (*Charles Haid*). Very strange things start to happen to him during his sessions in the tank and Jessup comes to the conclusion that the changes in his consciousness are being externalised—his body is physically regressing along with his mind. And what's more, these manifestations begin to occur even when he's not in the tank,

Above: Ken Russell directs William Hurt and Blair Brown on the set of *Altered States*. Above right: Jessup creates, then unites with, a kind of cosmic whirlpool after being transformed into a future being by the power of his own mind. Below: Eddie Jessup relaxes in the sensory deprivation tank.

along with increasingly disturbing visions.

His two friends aren't convinced of this at first but when Jessup regresses one night into an ape man and escapes from the laboratory, beating up two watchmen in the process, to go on a spree through the city which ends up in the local zoo, they are obliged to face the truth, though unwillingly.

By this point Emily has returned and Jessup is beginning to appreciate just how much she means to him but the Great

Obsession draws him on. Finally, in truly spectacular and frightening sequence, he is sucked back along the neural pathways of the Universe to the moment of the Big Bang itself and comes face to face with the Absolute, a confrontation that almost destroys him but he is saved by Emily's courageous plunge into the physical vortex that manifests itself inside the laboratory to bring him back (it's the ultimate example of a man being Redeemed by the Love of a Good Woman).





Above: Emily (Blair Brown) tries to support her husband after a terrifying psychic experience which affects everyone in the experiment room. Below: two scenes from the sequence in which Jessup (William Hurt) travels to Mexico to investigate the effects of the local Indians' hallucinogenic drugs.

Having faced the Absolute and found nothing but a terrible void Jessup fears that he can never become part of the "real" world again but once again Emily comes to his rescue during a final metamorphosis, which this time occurs inside his apartment, and forces him to choose life instead of the Infinite by putting her own life in danger.

You can interpret *Altered States* in several ways—as a modern reworking of the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde story or a film about a woman

who triumphantly competes with God/the Universe or whatever for the love of her man (in which case, for all its apparent mysticism, it's basically a celebration of humanism) but whether or not you agree with whatever point you believe Chayefsky was trying to make, or even think it's nothing but a load of old rope, you have to admit Russell has made a stunning piece of cinema out of the original material. It would have been easy to make it all seem infuriatingly pretentious or simply

ludicrous but Russell avoided all the pitfalls, even during the ape man sequence that could have easily drifted into absurdity (I cringe to think what someone like John Boorman would have done with it).

Altered States is a dazzling torrent of light and sound that succeeds in being entertaining, intellectually stimulating and rather disturbing all at the same time. Russell presents Jessup's hallucinations so skilfully that they hit you with the force of a punch in the stomach, particularly if you are sitting in the front row as I was. The sudden shifts in reality—like the moment when Jessup steps out of the bathroom and finds himself on the brink of a cliff above the depths of Hell itself—become increasingly unsettling and by the time I left the cinema I was feeling distinctly shell-shocked.

I never thought I'd live to see the day but I've got to admit that Ken Russell (Ken Russell!) has made what will probably rank as one of the all-time great science fiction movies. The mind boggles.



By George, he's done it! But this time, he has *really* done it... George Lucas has finally severed all officialdom ties with Hollywood and retreated—not to buying up Pinewood as has been rumoured—but to his Skywalker ranch and virtual film studios, in Marin County, outside San Francisco. Out of the limelight in fact—or as best as he can. Because, his every move is spotlighted. If Lucas coughs, Hollywood catches the cold.

Ironically, it was to San Francisco that Lucas mentor "Francy" Coppola first moved to when attempting to put Film City behind him and do his thing—films, in the main—his way with no up-graded cost-accountants telling him how. Coppola's bid for independence, the birth of his Zoetrope company, failed. He had to close up shop after a couple of films, including Lucas's *THX 1138* (1971) and go back to scripting in and for the film capital. He won an Oscar for writing *Patterson* (1970), and won *The Godfather* (1972) as an extra prize. This put him back on top again, and once more he tried to swing Zoetrope in San Fran. After *Apocalypse Now* (1979), very nearly his own, he has stayed in Hollywood, work-wise, bought himself an old studio and is working like stink to save it from falling financially around his bearded head.

George Lucas, however, is very different from his spiritual father. To start with, George is loaded... to and beyond the gills. Hollywood needs him more than he needs it. For instance, in recently published figures, it is proved that *The Empire Strikes Back* earned \$150,800,000 last year or a mind-boggling 70.3% of all 20th Century-Fox's 1980 revenue...

None of this is news to *Starburst* readers, though!

What is new is that George Lucas has now cut all his umbilical cords with Hollywood's industrial scene. He has resigned from the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (home of the Oscar, also known these days as Threepio's child by Artoo). He has also quit membership of both the Writer's Guild and the Director's Guild. Both of these unions are about to go on strike, if they haven't started by the time you're reading this. Lucas's resignations doesn't mean he can simply go ahead with whatever movie he has planned for the summer, as his Lucasfilm is still a signatory to

contracts with both guilds. At least, it is for now... though the way he's going that could be next for the chop, unless he changes his American citizenship first! (Incidentally, he could, of course, go into production with a film if he had previously signed a special deal with the guilds agreeing the future economical result of the strike).

But no, what these shock moves (well, they were one big shock for Hollywood) really mean is that Lucas has chosen the path for his future. A producer only, he'll be. He'll write the rest of the *Star Wars* legends, of course,

plus any sequel to his *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as directed by Steven Spielberg. But, now it's quite obvious that he won't be scripting his projects anymore... nor directing them.

The man, you see, is now a tycoon. And rather more disposed to assisting others into filmmaking than most modern criteenons. He'll be working more like a tycoon of the 30s, more of an Irving Thalberg than the despotic Harry Cohn.

Apparently, Lucas's decision to quit the Directors' Guild was prompted by him being fined—secretly and rather hefty so—by

his union for going against Guild dictates and featuring Irvin Kershner's director credit card at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back* and not upfront as per usual in films, indeed as fought for and insisted upon by the Directors' Guild of America union.

Funny thing, though. Lucas did exactly the same thing with his own credit on *Star Wars*. And the DGA didn't say a thing: Either the Guild didn't notice the slip; didn't mind—who is this "Lucas kid, anyway?"—or just didn't feel that such a brash newcomer (making, what was it again, a space fantasy film with robots? You gotta be

REVENGE C

A SPECIAL REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE THIRD OF THE STA



kidding!) would ever earn enough money to be worth the fining.

Irvin Kershner reports he certainly didn't complain about the placing of the credit card. He's furious about the Guild's move in allegedly protecting his interests. "The DGA," declares Kershner, "works for me. I don't work for the DGA." It would appear that the DGA is acting rather more like a British trade union . . .

Kershner himself was also fined for agreeing to the misplaced credit—Lucas paid the fine for him. "I was busy cutting the picture and George protected me

from the whole thing, so I'm not sure on the precise details. I think the Guild hurts itself by doing this sort of thing. As a result, Lucas is now going to get a British director for his next film and Hollywood is losing work because of the way the DGA acted. We've lost something."

Apart from issuing a brief statement that his Hollywood break-away moves were "personal", George Lucas remains hidden away on his Skywalker ranch . . . busy with dreaming up the latest Skywalker adventure, *Revenge of the Jedi*.

Shooting on this third of the

series—the last in the first trilogy—has been officially postponed by George. Instead of going ahead this summer as first announced, production will begin at EMI-Elstree studios as per Lucas tradition, in January. This delay should not interfere much, if at all, with Lucas plans to issue a new *Star Wars* chapter every three years.

But just who the British director that Kershner hinted about for Jedi remains a closely guarded secret. One obvious possibility is Harley Cokliss, who succeeded the late John Barry as one of the two assistant directors

on *Empire*.

Yes, yes, yes, I know Cokliss is American. That's simply an accident of birth. He's English by training, adoption and thus far, by his career . . . And it just so happens that he is otherwise engaged this summer when the film should have begun. Throughout July and most of August he'll be down-under, in the very fruitful new film-making area of New Zealand, making a Roger Corman co-production called *Battletrap*, a futuristic action yarn set in the remote Kiwi area of Central Otago.

Which means, of course, he'll be well finished with that by January . . .

The Rank Organisation in London was quick to reject the surprise offer from various Lucas pals to buy up Pinewood studios, lock, stock and 007 Stage. The bid arrived, completely out of the blue, on the studios' telex machine one morning, which seems to indicate that Coppola, Spielberg and company are, perhaps, a trifle too electronic in their business methods these days. The first British response was something on the lines of, "Telex purchase bids are not just on, old boy . . ."

First trade stories of the purchase plans linked George Lucas with the deal. He was not, however in any way associated with it. Nor does he need to be. He has his own production facilities outside his front (and back) door, and plainly prefers Elstree over Pinewood when shooting in London.

Partnered, in fact, with Coppola and Spielberg in the offer were directors Martin Scorsese and Brian De Palma, and Coppola's British consultant and in-house director, the veteran Michael Powell.

As further proof—if any more was required—of George Lucas' importance in and to filmdom, *Star Wars* has been re-released for the fourth time in America . . . and immediately earned more money in a week than any other 20th Century-Fox release around. Just over a million dollars per day from some 1,566 cinemas. Actual figures for the first week of the re-issue (soon to be followed by *Empire*'s first re-release) were \$6,549,751, a smidgen below the last time it went out and earned \$6,770,165 in its opening week. John Boorman's *Excalibur* did rather better. But then it ought to. It's new . . .

OF THE JEDI

WARS FILMS AND THE MENTOR OF THE SERIES GEORGE LUCAS.



a tale from the rim...



A few days ago, we received a mysterious package at the Starburst office. It contained page upon page of colour artwork by the top British comic strip artist Paul Neary and a rather curious letter. When we tried to contact Mr Neary for some explanation we were informed he had "gone away". We reproduce his letter below and the first two pages of his artwork on pages 44/45 this issue.

My dear Mr McKenzie,
It was a chill December evening when the first inkling of the terror to come imposed itself upon my consciousness. The whispering strains of a sleet-laden rain howled about the turrets of my garret dwelling and pulled me from a fitful slumber into the vertiginous limbo of a state that was neither true sleep nor true wakefulness.

Argue as you may whether the ensuing phantasm was the result of the now-drained Chivas Regal bottle that confused my stumbling efforts to rise, or of some other, less-earthly phenomenon . . . whatever the cause, the outcome was the same.

In the dark of my fumblings I saw — not in the true sense of seeing, but in a manner that I am still at a loss to explain in plain English.

If you should read further, I implore you to do so with an open mind, for too often have I endured the thinly-veiled derision of former friends who have taken to scurrying in an effort to protect their meagre intellects from further assault. The functions and parties I used to attend from such eagerness are abuzz with tales of "Neary's Vision", but I feel no hatred for these people, just a sense of helplessness at their folly . . .

But I digress, for I am resolved to set down in words the wondrous transformation that my life underwent following the swirl of sights, smells and happenings that engulfed me on that night. Immediately following the first blurred experiences of a culture so alien as to lie beyond mortal comprehension, I was shocked into full wakefulness and the dread vision mercifully receded long enough for me to take a steading draught of the amber fluid that has been my solace through these wondrous but trying times. In spite of the calming effect these visions experienced thereon, escape was not to be, and soon which I returned. The engulfling whirlpool of experiences became less alien to me and I began to be more at home in this strange world (which, I had discovered, was called Spondoolik IV by its inhabitants). As time went by I found the London society that I had once felt was my home was the place that was becoming progressively more alien, and it was then that I was resolved to remain forever among my new friends upon the planet Spondoolik IV.

I must ask you not to grieve for me, for I have found more dignity and virtue in my new homeland than ever I found on Earth. In an effort to explain something of the place I now call home, I have set out in words and pictures my last Earthly testament which I have taken the liberty of titling *Tales from the Rim*. I wish everyone remaining on Earth well.

Paul Neary,
Earth 1981



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FIEND

STARBURST PREVIEWS A NEW LOW-BUDGET HORROR MOVIE FROM INDEPENDENT PRODUCER/DIRECTOR DON DOHLER.

Fiend is a new, low-budget horror film from producer-director Don Dohler. But though the name may be unknown to Starburst readers, Dohler is no stranger to the world of cinema fantasy.

Dohler's earlier creative associations with the genre include his role in the publishing of the special effects magazine *Cinemagic*, which was recently bought by

O'Quinn Studios, publishers of the American magazine *Starlog*. He is also the author of a book on the same subject, *Film Magic*.

Dohler made his first film at the age of 12, though his first full-length feature, called *The Alien Factor*, didn't appear until several years later.

The Fiend of the title is a reanimated corpse who stalks the countryside,

strangling unfortunates who cross his path and absorbing their life energies, to maintain his "living state". Dohler hopes to sign a tv deal for *Fiend* before commencing his next feature, *Night Beast*. All he needs is 100,000 dollars, the same sum he spent on *Fiend*. We wish him well.

Information and photographs supplied by George Stover (pictured inset opposite).



Fiend (1981)

Don Leifert (Eric Longfellow/The Fiend), Richard Nelson (Gary Kander), Elaine White (Merna Kender), George Stover (Dennis Frye), Del Winan (Jimmy Barnes), Greg Dohler (Scatty), Kim Dohler (Kristy Michaels), Debbie Vogel (Helein Weiss).

Written, directed and edited by Don Dohler, Photographed by Richard Geiwitz, Special visual effects by David A. Remwick, Music composed and performed by Paul Wozniak, Makeup and set design by Mark Supersky, Colour Consultant Peta Garey, Sound engineer Jim Fox.

Time: 93 mins

No British certificate



A Starburst Interview with RAY HARRYHAWK

Interview by Phil Edwards

Can Of The Titans, which opens in England in July, is probably Ray Harryhausen's most eagerly anticipated feature. After the commencement of *Samurai* and *The Eye of the Tiger* it's going to be intriguing to see what made the master of stop-motion animation fall out of his last.

The special effects range at Pinewood has all deserved when I visited Harryhausen in January to capture his responses over several models of the Maxon from *Clouds of War*.

Travis road by the edge of the ocean. Two of his four arms were driven in, he home coming to us. One arm was broken in two places... "GAAAH! You can't touch!"

Starburst: This project must demand complete involvement of the cast and crew? **Ray Harryhausen:** You could tell me about the *Frozen Kingdom* and the *Land of the Lost*. We have quite a ensemble now. Although we'll have some special effects, such as the various effects pieces, we'll need more participation from the actors.

Starburst: And the *King of the*...

Clouds of War? **Ray Harryhausen:** That's right. We had some difficulties because the *King of the*... *Clouds of War*... **Starburst:** What's the difference between the two?

Ray Harryhausen: Well, *Clouds of War* is a

more serious-looking production with serious action scenes, whereas *King of the*...

Clouds of War is more like a comedy.

Starburst: When you're doing a comedy, do you feel more pressure?

Ray Harryhausen: No, not really. I'm

more interested in the action scenes.

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KLUSSEN



Above: The giant Kraken menacing the crew of the Andromeda (Judi Bowker) in the opening scene of Clash of the Titans (1981). Below left: Behind-the-scenes photo of the filming of the opening sequence. Below center: Nick Mancuso as the twin brother of the goddess Thetis, King Triton's son, who was born with both male and female organs. The young lover, Lady Hamlin son of Zeus and Andromeda (Judi Bowker).





can cause havoc with a shooting schedule. Apart from Jim Danforth, who were the other animators involved?

Steven Archer is a new young animator who is very enthused about the medium of dimensional animation. He should be doing some interesting work in the future.

Is this the first time you have worked with other animators on one of your films?

Yes, outside of Mighty Joe Young.

In the case of Jim Danforth, he's an animator with his own track record. How did you physically work with him?

We would of course discuss the scene thoroughly before starting the sequence. The background plates would be cut into a rough continuity based on the storyboard sketches. The background plates, which were photographed about one year before, would be analysed for synchronisation. Jim would then work out any necessary calculations or camera moves before making a test. After viewing the test the next day more discussions would take place involving the action. If another test was not necessary, shooting was ready to begin.

In an animated sequence, for example, would you work on it with Danforth or would he do the whole scene?

It would depend on the scene involved. Parts of some sequences would have already been completed. It was then necessary to fill in the unfinished sections. It is, of course, ideal to try to do a complete sequence in itself but many times this is not possible.

What is Steven Archer's background?

Steven has been making his own experimental films for several years, using small plasticine clay figures. I was most impressed by the character he was able to achieve in a very difficult medium. I felt that he could work with us quite well.

Was it your work that inspired his own interest in the field?

Yes, I believe so.

Which sequences in the film was he responsible for?

Steven Archer did various bits and pieces throughout the film but I had him concentrate on *Bubo*, the owl. Jim Danforth worked on some of the flying horse as well as the *Dioskillos* sequence. Again, the storyboards are important to help maintain a unity throughout. Your last few films have dealt with mythological characters and it's obviously an area that interests you. The *Ymir*, from *Twenty Million Miles to Earth* for example, is a character from your own imagination. Is there a reason why you have preferred using mythological creatures in recent years, rather than your own inventions?

I believe mythology is an ideal subject for our particular type of film. It has built-in grotesque characters that you do not have to write into a script. As I've said before, I find the process of delving into the past far more romantic and interesting than the cold indifference of the concepts of the future.

Apart from *Earth versus the Flying Saucers*, have you been approached to make a space fiction film?

We have had several scripts presented to us

involving science fiction but nothing has excited us to date to make us become involved in the different problems of producing it for the screen. Perhaps this will alter in the future, who knows?

What happened to *Sinbad Goes to Mars*?

It's in limbo.

Is it something you would still like to make? We might. We have certain script problems to try to master so we've shelved it for the moment.

It wouldn't be a space fiction picture as such? It would be... I can't really tell you what it would be. It would be an interesting combination of the future and the past.

One of the creatures in *Clash of the Titans*, the two-headed wolf dog, was originally going to be used in an earlier film, wasn't it? Yes, in *Jason and the Argonauts*. We had a sequence designed in which Medea was to lead Jason into the Gates of Hell — as she did in the legend. He was to bathe in the elixir that would



Opposite top: Perseus (Harry Hamlin) prepares to battle the gorgon Medusa. Opposite below: Perseus and Ammon (Burgess Meredith) watch the winged horse Pegasus as it comes to the waterhole to drink. Above: Ray Harryhausen clowning for a publicity still.

make him invulnerable to the Hydra. We found, during production, that the script was too long and we took the sequence out. The two-headed wolf dog was to be the guardian. We transferred this idea to *Clash of the Titans* as we felt that Medusa's temple needed a guardian.

Clash of the Titans is quite similar to *Jason and the Argonauts*. Both are based in Greek Mythology — how would you compare the two films?

I don't believe you can compare the two stories any more than you could compare two Westerns, or two Mystery stories or science fiction stories. Of course they are both based on Greek Mythology but the approach is different.

One of the characters in *Clash*, *Calibos*, is a combination of animation and an actor in make-up...

Yes. That was done because it became necessary for *Calibos* to speak. As you well know, dialogue, with an animated character,

becomes a most difficult problem to do convincingly.

Is that difficult to do in terms of getting proportions right on the screen and so forth? Yes, that is always a problem, but it is something we can overcome. Neil McCarthy plays the close-up

the close-up *Calibos*. I don't like to discuss this type of problem in detail as I feel it will cause the viewer to look for "stems", so to speak. We in the special effects field are all trying to create an illusion on the screen for a particular subject matter. Why destroy this attempt by over-exposure to details? Particularly before the film is completed and released.

I certainly agree with you, before release. But it is an interesting point. Starburst and magazines like *Cinefantastique* cater to a cross-over readership. There are those who do want to see a movie purely for enjoyment without any interest in 'how it's done', but there are many people who do want to know such things.

That may be your point of view, but certainly not mine. I don't stand alone as I have read many letters concerning the same issue. Many people feel that far too much detailed information has already been released. There is still the point of view that once you know how a magician performs his tricks you no longer have great an interest in the magician or his tricks. I would say in argument that this interest in special effects does bring young people into the field. It gets them interested in a subject that perhaps, had they not known about it, would have kept them out. It can bring new blood into the special effects field.

This may well be true but I believe that the group of young people who are really interested in entering the field professionally, will somehow discover for themselves. For example: when I first saw the 1933 *King Kong*, I would not have enjoyed it half as much, as a film on its own, if I had known in advance how it was done. Later, of course, I made it my business to find out how it was made in spite of the lack of magazines such as you mentioned.

Is it this type of over-exposure which makes you protective of your techniques?

I think so, because we are in the business of creating illusions. If you tell how the illusions are done, it's no longer an illusion, it becomes a technical feat. We choose our subject matter for filming on the basis of stressing the fantasy elements. Subjects that cannot be photographed in the normal course of photography, I think the techniques used to execute it is secondary to the entertainment value of the picture. I firmly believe special effects are getting to the point where they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

How long have the animation sequences taken you on *Clash of the Titans*?

They have taken over a year. We have had other effects than animation in this picture... a considerable amount of high speed photography and an enormous amount of blue blocking shots and travelling mattes. All add up in preparation and execution in terms of time. What was the longest single sequence to animate?

We do bits and pieces over a long period of

time. I started the animation with *Pegasus* then abandoned it to start another sequence. I felt it was necessary to 'spot' the main animated characters throughout the film in order to get the feel of the overall picture. The longest single sequences was probably the *Scorpion* scene.

Stop-motion animation is probably one of the most physically tedious aspects of any part of film making. How do you keep up the energy and interest to keep going? Do you have days when you come into the studio and think, "I can't touch that damned horse again!"

Of course. That is why there are those who consider it a nerve-wracking profession. I still find that the anticipation of seeing the following day's rushes — to see if you really captured on film what you only had in your mind — is a large factor in keeping up interest over a long period.

What other animators do you admire yourself? Many in the past. Trnka made some marvellous films. *The Russian New Gulliver*, made in 1934, had some wonderful moments in it, although it wasn't a realistic style of animation. Undoubtedly there are many young people who are experimenting on their own who have yet to appear in the profession.

How would you compare your work with the animation technique used for the Taun-Taun sequence in Empire Strikes Back?

There's no reason to compare it just because it's in the field of animation. In *Empire* they had two, maybe three sequences of animation that when coupled together lasted perhaps five or six minutes. In our projects the animation is the essential part of the picture. Our films are designed to encompass all the elements of fantasy, Greek Mythology, dinosaurs, or whatever-you. In *Empire*, the animation is a minor part of the whole as the picture has other values and other ideas they wish to stress. What *Empire* achieved was excellent, but they could probably afford to take two or three months to do what we have to do in perhaps a week. The sequences (*in Empire*) are remembered most by people who have a technical appreciation. But regardless — it was all great entertainment.

The type of shot they do in Empire Strikes Back, when the camera moves in relation to the model, almost a "helicopter" type effect ... is that particularly difficult to do?

Oh yes. That means frame-by-frame rotoscoping of the original footage shot from a helicopter. Then you have to rotoscope it and re-align it to each frame, so that the movement of the helicopter and the inlay on the ground is in harmony. That one scene could take several months to execute.

This underlines that they have a lot longer to spend on a few minutes animation than you do on a whole feature.

Yes. When I design our pictures I have to do it in such a way that a couple of cuts of animation will take maybe two or three days to complete and not a couple of months. We would never finish the picture if we did that as our pictures have a vast amount of animation to cope with. There is a big difference in the approach, that's why I can't see there is a comparison.

How do your films evolve? You've worked with Beverley Cross on several films, does he come up with a script or is it a joint effort? They evolve in many different ways. Some develop from sketches, some are based on popular novels, others come from news items. For *Clash of the Titans*, Beverley came up with the story idea. As you probably know, he is an expert on Greek Mythology. Perseus and Andromeda has always been one of my favourite legends.

At what point do you begin creating the animation models?

Almost right away. The design of the models have a direct relationship to the story line. We have many conferences in order to solve the many story problems. I make drawings of situations and/or characters I feel would be visually impressive, while Beverley is developing the storyline. Many times temporary clay

models are quickly made to aid in developing an idea. The actual animated model is not constructed until we have a final script. *So, when did Clash of the Titans actually start as an idea?*

Oh, three years ago, more than that perhaps. When we were doing *Jason* I wanted to do another Greek Mythology picture. We left room in the final scene for a sequel to *Jason*, but it never occurred. Beverley came up with *Clash of the Titans* on his own and I think he worked out a very interesting and unusual script. Of course we have to "manipulate" Greek mythology in order to make a presentable drama for the screen. For example, *Pegasus* was born out of Medusa's blood. If we'd kept to that, just for the sake of being accurate, we wouldn't have had *Pegasus* in the film at the end. It is important to manipulate certain episodes to allow for the laws of good film



Above: Ray Harryhausen on location with the crew of *Clash of the Titans*. Top right: Harryhausen and director Desmond Davis discuss a sequence on location. Right below: Ray Harryhausen and friend! Inset: Perseus (Harry Hamlin) comes face to face with the three Stygian witches in an effort to defeat the Kraken.

making.

How have you refined your techniques over the years? Dynamation, Super Dynamation, Dynarama... is there actually a difference? Do you think there is?

I don't know, that's why I'm asking!

[Laughter] We have to go back to the origin of the word *Dynamation*, why it was devised in the first place. The reason was that many times, in our early films, we were always classified as a cartoon subject and sometimes we still are. Many people are adverse to cartoons, so we tried to develop a different wording. When you say "stop-motion animation" . . . that doesn't mean much to the average person. "Dynamation" was sort of the basis of the term *Dynamation*. We hoped to start a new feeling for this type of picture where you have the combination of live actors, intimately involved with dimensional animated creatures, which has

been our specialty, as you know. Then, when certain improvements were made, ways of duplicating stock, reproducing movement and so on, we felt it necessary to add *Super-Dynamation* and several other words. This then described that there had been some sort of advancement.

Clash of the Titans is shot in normal widescreen ratio. *First Man in the Moon* was your only anamorphic feature . . .

And I hope it's the last!

Why does that present special problems?

Well, you have to redesign the picture in a different way. As you know we use a lot of rear-screen and miniature projection. It becomes a big problem to try to project a Cinema Scope production picture. I couldn't very well model all the characters like long thin beans so that when they were expanded they would look normal. That would present too

many other technical problems. It means you would have to redesign your whole concept to use other methods than what we use.

Do you ever direct the live-action sequences which are later integrated with the animation? Sometimes I do, other times the director does it. But we always have a "meeting of the minds" beforehand, as well as the story boards to go by.

The director of *Clash*, Desmond Davies, seems an unlikely choice for a fantasy film . . .

We felt that he had done a number of Shakespearean films, classical and rather unusual films and that he could give our picture a treatment and approach suitable to the subject matter. Have you ever had arguments as to how a sequence was done?

Oh, many times! The whole business of film making is an argument. Charles Schneer and I have had an enormous number of arguments throughout our long association. Everybody has a different opinion, but a point of view has to be arrived at that will be the best for the picture. Sometimes the best comes out of arguments because you take a bit of each person's concept and out of it you produce something which has more value that just one point of view. There are, of course, exceptions. As Charles once said, "One of our greatest assets is that we always disagree about everything!"

Why haven't you directed a picture from stem to stern yourself? Does directing people turn you off?

It doesn't exactly turn me on particularly. I like the type of performer that does exactly what you want him to! [Laughter] Not only that . . . it doesn't interest me to the point where I could do my best at both ends. I think that one part of the picture would suffer. With a *Dynamation* film there is just too much to worry about, actually doing the *Dynamation* sequences.

With your interest in the past, do you think you would have been an archaeologist if you hadn't gone into film making?

I was tempted.

Have you ever thought about what you would be doing now if you hadn't seen *King Kong* in 1933?

It is amazing how a simple act, such as going out to a movie, can change your whole life. It must be destiny at work, what else can you say? If I had never seen *Kong* I don't quite know what I would be doing at present.

I have received many letters from young people who saw *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* or some of our earlier pictures . . . claiming they had their whole lives completely changed. I then see my whole life flashing before again because of *King Kong*.

Finally, is it difficult to remain objective about your films when you are so close to them? It is very difficult. When one starts a long project, like *Clash of the Titans*, there is always the mental vision of how the film will finally appear on the screen. This, I think, keeps one going. As the months roll by and the mental vision becomes a reality, the satisfaction is enormous.

Ray Harryhausen, thank you very much.



Feature by
Phil Edwards and
Derek Trehearne

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

Plan from Outer Space, loathed and abominated on its release and almost forgotten for nearly two decades has, within the last two years, become one of the great cult classics of the late night cinema circuits. Recent screenings in London have played to capacity houses and it has even been honoured as *The Worst Film Ever Made at The Worst Film Festival held in New York in November 1980.*

Plan 9 was the brainchild of the extraordinary independent film maker, Edward D. Wood Jrn. His first film was *Glen or Glenda* (1952), a semi-autobiographical story about transvestites. The writer/director managed to secure the services of Bela Lugosi who acted as narrator for the film. The once great horror star was well and truly on the skids by this time, his career and health ruined by drink and drugs. Lugosi and Wood were soon good friends and the two became part of a circle of Hollywood oddballs.

Wood's next feature was *Jaibait* in 1954. In 1956 he returned to the horror genre with *Bride of the Monster* with which Lugosi hoped to re-establish his name.

Following *Bride of the Monster*, Wood shot some scenes of Lugosi dressed as his Dracula costume in and around the actor's home. This was to be a film entitled *Tomb of the Vampire*. Lugosi died on August 16th 1956, after four days of shooting. This left Wood with approximately three minutes of Lugosi footage. *Tomb of the Vampire* was scrapped, but not wanting to waste the film, Wood wrote a new script, *Grave Robbers from Outer Space*, combining the then most popular elements of horror and science fiction. The

"Greetings, my friends. We are all interested in the future for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives. And remember, my friends, future events such as these will affect you in the future. You are interested in the unknown, the mysterious, the unexplainable—that is why you are here. And now for the first time we are bringing to you the full story of what happened on that fateful day. We are giving you all the evidence based only on the secret testimony of the miserable souls who survived this terrifying ordeal. The incident, the places, my friends, we cannot keep this a secret any longer. Let us punish the guilty, let us reward the innocent. My friends, can your hearts stand the shocking facts about grave robbers from outer space?"'

title was changed to *Plan 9 from Outer Space* before release.

Financing was acquired from a Baptist church, among others, and Wood put a cast together comprised of a selection of some of Hollywood's worst actors, many his own friends. It was necessary to hire a double to fill out Lugosi's scenes, although "double" is perhaps too generous a term. The "actor", Dr Tom Mason, bore no resemblance to Lugosi whatsoever. He spends most of his time wandering around the cardboard sets, a cloak-draped arm trying to conceal his impotence.

Most of *Plan 9* was shot at Quality Studios, a Poverty Row outfit in Hollywood. It was here that the film's biggest set, a graveyard, was constructed. This consisted of several yards of fake grass, miniature artificial tombstones and dead bushes. These, on occasions, hinder the cast during the hectic action scenes and in one shot a gravestone is unwittingly kicked over. Wood's shoestring budget could not afford a retake and it is such gems of shoddy production which afford much of the pleasure of *Plan 9*.

Though there are several other sets, it doesn't take an expert to see that they are all the same place, simply redressed with some strategically placed curtains or props. Perhaps the most impressive of these is the interior of *Space Station Seven*: a motley collection of knobs and dials, an office desk and a curtain back cloth. This set is also used for the Pentagon Offices, the cockpit of a plane and the Trent home. The same set also sees service as the interior and exterior of the flying saucer. It is this flying saucer which has caused

some comment among film trivia buffs. The saucers are round, yet both the exterior and the interior of the ship is square. To confuse the issue even further, the hero describes the UFO as cigar-shaped! The police car and uniforms look convincing, and so they should, Wood was able to acquire the real thing from Tor Johnson's son Carl, a police officer.

Much of the surreal quality of *Plan 9* is due to Wood's inability to secure the use of an optical printer. This resulted in a mixture of day and day-for-night shots contained within the same sequence. One to watch for has Mona McKinnon running from the graveyard set at night into a totally mismatched location shot in daylight.

Though much stock footage of army manoeuvres was used, Wood shot several special effects scenes for the film. In the script these scenes must have seemed spectacular, and given Wood's minuscule budget, the results achieved by effects men Charles Duncan and Tommy Kemp aren't that bad.

The flying saucers (dressed up hubcaps or paper plates—take your choice, sources differ) are dangled on clearly visible wires against a painted sky. One remarkable effect in the film's climax has a burning UFO exploding over Los Angeles. This was achieved by dousing the saucer in petrol, setting it alight, and flinging it across the stage in front of the camera.

Space Station Seven was a ball suspended against a star field. The design of this ship is truly extraordinary, looking as it does like a giant female breast adrift in deep space.

Members of the cast included Vampira (real



THE PLAN 9 PLOT

"Reports of flying saucers and mysterious deaths terrify the residents of San Fernando Valley. Although the Army has had open combat with the space ships, the government publicly denies their existence to avoid international panic.

In outer space, The Ruler (John Breckinridge) sends Eros (Dudley Manlove) and Tanna (Joanna Lee) to destroy the earth before the earth destroys the universe with nuclear testing. They institute Plan 9, which is the resurrection of the earth dead. In a San Francisco cemetery, they start with two corpses (Vampire and Bela Lugosi) who subsequently kill two grave diggers. Inspector Clay (Tor Johnson), a giant of a man goes to the cemetery to investigate the double murder and is killed by the ghouls.

At the edge of the cemetery is the home of Jeff and Paula

Trent (Gregory Walcott and Mona McKinnon). Jeff, an airline pilot, having seen the saucers, is naturally disturbed when he has to leave Paula. After he has gone, the ghoul man breaks in and attacks Paula. She escapes through the cemetery to the highway and is rescued by a passing motorist. As part of Plan 9, the newly-brained Inspector Clay is resurrected and joins the other two ghouls.

At the Pentagon, General Roberts (Lyle Talbot) sends Col Edwards (Tom Keene), who has some previous combat with the saucers, to San Fernando Valley to investigate.

Meanwhile Eros and Tanna take off for outer space to show their ghouls to the Ruler. He decides that they are to destroy one ghoul and complete their assignment to destroy the earth.

The ship returns to the cemetery and the doomed ghoul

appears at the Trent home where Police Lt Harper (Duke Moore) and Col Edwards are questioning Paula. Their attempts to shoot the ghoul are futile but suddenly a ray from the space ship turns the ghoul into a skeleton.

The men proceed to search the cemetery and succeed in finding the ship. Paula, who has been left behind, is captured by the lone Inspector Clay and is being carried towards the space ship but is rescued when some policemen overpower the ghoul.

Jeff, Col Edwards and Lt Harper enter the space ship and Jeff attacks Eros. During the struggle, several delicate instruments are mashed and flying sparks cause a fire. Tanna rushes to get the ship into flight but Jeff, Col Edwards and Lt Harper escape just before it takes off. On the ground, they watch the spectacular explosion of the flaming ship in mid-air."

Plot synopsis from the film's original pressbook.





Above left: Two reanimated corpses stalk through the night. Above right: Tor Johnson advances on *The Ruler* (John Breckinridge) as *Eros* (Dudley Manlove) and Tanna (Joanna Lee) look on with interest. Below: *Vampira, the lady with the eighteen inch waist!* Below centre: *Bela Lugosi's double arrives at the home of Jeff and Paule Trent*. Below right: *Tor Johnson swings into action*.



name Maila Nurmi) who was something of a cult figure herself. She hosted late night horror film fests on local TV stations and played bit parts in several other low-budget scare-shows. She was notable for her grotesque, eighteen-inch waist.

Tor Johnson, a former heavyweight wrestler, makes a meal of his living-dead role. Johnson played minor non-speaking parts in several 50s schlock horror films, including *The Black Sleep* (1956) and Wood's *Bride of the Monster*. *Plan 9* gave him a chance to exercise his vocal chords, for the most part his dialogue is nearly unintelligible.

Dudley Manlove went on to star as the voice of soap commercials on radio. Joanna Lee, who played Tanna, a female alien, finally found her niche as a TV scriptwriter after appearing in *The Brain Eaters* and other junk science fiction films.

Greg Walcott was a minor TV star in the American series, *87th Precinct*. He is still active today, playing character roles, his most recent being the successful Clint Eastwood starrer, *Every Which Way But Loose*.

Perhaps the real star of *Plan 9* is Criswell, whose opening statement, made seated at a desk, (probably the same piece of furniture which shows up several times throughout the opus) perfectly

sets the tone for the feature. Criswell was very much a personality in his own right: a crackpot prophet who, through his television and radio broadcasts, Criswell Predicts, made many outrageous predictions such as that in 1976 the American government would give Mexico back to the Indians; that by 1973 several homosexual cities would exist as suburbs in major metropolitan areas; and that in 1980 there would be outbreaks of cannibalism in Pennsylvania; he perhaps a young George Romero heard this particular broadcast and it was this that inspired *Night of the Living Dead*? If these prophecies weren't bare-brained enough, Criswell predicted that there would be an *Interplanetary Convention* held in Las Vegas during the 80s. He even announced a guest list which included representatives from Mars, Venus, Neptune and the Moon!

Criswell took his role in *Plan 9* in all seriousness. He wrote his own lines for the *Prologue* and *Epilogue* as well as commenting on the action throughout the film. Here's a sample.

"All of us on this Earth know that there is a time to live and that there is a time to die. Yet Death is always a shock to those left behind. It is even more of a shock when Death comes suddenly, without warning."



PLAN 9 DIALOGUE

The real pleasure of *Plan 9* rests with Wood's script and the truly awful performances of all the cast. So, for your delectation, here are some of the choicer lines from the film.

Wife (*Mona McKeeon*) to husband (*Greg Walcott*) after he has told her that he has seen a flying saucer. "Saucer?" she exclaims, pointing to the sky. "You mean the kind from up there?"

Cops discussing the weird events—
1st Cop: "Did you get anything out of her?"
2nd Cop: "True, she was frightened, and in a state of shock. But don't forget she tore her nightgown and had scratched feet."
1st Cop: "Yeah, I hadn't thought of that."

Exchange between Hero and Wife as he is leaving to fight the aliens—
Wife: "Be careful. Don't worry about me."

Hero: "Awu... you're the only thing I do worry about! Forget about flying saucers. They're up there, but there's something in that cemetery and that's too close for comfort."

Wife: "The saucers are up there and the cemetery's out there. But I'll be locked up in there (pointing to her bedroom). Now off to your wild blue yonder."

Hero: "You'll promise you'll lock the doors immediately?"

Wife: "I promise! Besides I'll be in bed before half an hour if you stay with your pillow beside me."

Hero: "My pillow?"

Wife: "Well, I have to have something to keep me company while you're away!"

Senior cop on the discovery of the body of Inspector Clay (Tor Johnson)—

"Inspector Clay is dead. Murdered. And somebody is responsible!"

Lt. Harper (Duke Moor) staring into open grave—

"I bet my badge right now—we haven't seen the last of them weirdos."

Or how about this one:

"There comes a time in each man's life when he can't even believe his own eyes. Flying saucers seen over Hollywood! Flying saucers seen over Washington DC! The Army convoy moves into the field. Rockets were quickly set up. Colonel Tom Edwards, in charge of Saucer Field Activity, was made to the greatest decision of his career. He made that decision! Colonel Edwards gave the signal to fire!!!!"

As entertaining as Plan 9 is, the story of its director is in fact tinged with sadness. Wood was an ex-marine who served with distinction during the war. He drifted into film-making after the war, although no reliable records exist of how that came about. After his brief, but intense, activity making Grade Z shockers, Wood became a heavy drinker. He is remembered by his friends as being generous to a fault and gave a home to many stray dogs. This peculiar lifestyle led to him being thrown out of one apartment after another. Down on his luck, he turned to making porn films, one of these being *Orgy of the Dead* in 1966 which blended sex and horror. It featured Criswell as the Prince of Darkness. Wood's last known feature was *Necromancy* in 1972. When he died of a heart attack in 1978 at the age of 56, he was making 8mm

sex educational shorts.

Plan 9 from Outer Space is rapidly becoming the bad film cult classic, due recently to its inclusion in Harry and Michael Medved's hugely popular book, *The Golden Turkey Awards*. But the film's reputation has been steadily building over the years. Two contemporary reviews described it this way:

"Played on the type of audience not particularly concerned with logic . . . only weirdness, the further out the better."

Motion Picture Herald

The Daily Cinema in 1959 showed that they knew what they were talking about when they described the film's special effects as "quite smart".

Starburst's John Brosnan, writing in his book *Horror People*, said of the film, "Plan 9 is so very bad that it exerts a strange fascination. The budget is apparently non-existent and the sets so small that it appears to have been made in somebody's garage."

Joe Dante, now a successful director (*Piranha*, *Hollywood Boulevard* and *The Howling*) once

wrote in *Famous Monsters*, "There is a distinct possibility it was one of the cheapest films ever made." Later, however, Dante seemed to realize the true magic of the film. In *Castile of Frankenstein* magazine in 1974 he wrote, "From the hammy opening by Criswell to the hammy afterword by Criswell, this grade-a home movie, masquerading as a theatrical film, is an unalloyed delight."

However, words cannot properly describe Plan 9. It is a film that must be seen, and seen more than once. Repeated viewings reveal more to enjoy and Brosnan's comment that it "exerts a strange fascination" really sum up the film perfectly.

But let's leave the final word on Plan 9 to Criswell. After the alien saucer has been destroyed in a dazzling display of pyrotechnics, the prophet tells us, in his best doom-laden voice, "my friends, you have seen this incident based on sworn testimony. Can you prove that it didn't happen? Perhaps on your way home someone will pass you in the dark and you will never know it because they will be from outer space. Many scientists believe that another world is watching us at this moment. We once laughed at the horseless carriage, the telephone, electric light, vitamins, radio and even television. And even some of us laugh at outer space. God help us in the future!"



KINVIG

■ Preview by John Fleming

Nigel Kneale, creator of *Quatermass*, has written a new seven-part comedy series called *Kinvig* which London Weekend Television is to network later this year.

Tony Hagarth stars as Des Kinvig, the owner of a run-down electrical repair shop. Prunella Gee co-stars as Miss Griffin, his eternally-angry customer, in Kinvig's fantasy world, however, Miss Griffin is really a visitor from the planet Mercury who has come with her bizarre assistants Loon, Bat and Sagga to save Earth from the insidious infiltration of the Xux (pronounced Zucks). The Xux are alien creatures who, for their own nefarious ends, are gradually replacing key earthlings with humanoid replicas — notably Patrick Newell (Mother in *The Avengers*) as an officious Rates Officer at the Brighton Borough Council (BBC).

The action takes place both on Earth and *inside* Mercury: the planet is hollow and peopled by a race who fled Atlantis during the Ice Age, taking part of the Atlantic Ocean with them, to form the "inland sea" of Mercury.

The inventive details one expects from Nigel Kneale are all there, but tend to be underplayed and, despite some Quantel

picture-flip and filmed laser effects, the production is shot as a conventional situation comedy by freelance producer/director Les Chatfield (whose last series for LWT was *Liza Goddard's Pig in the Middle*). All this, together with the major mis-casting of Prunella Gee and some rather distracting live audience laughter, virtually scuttles the project.

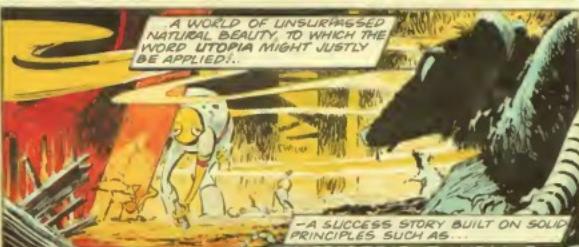
The series is worth watching, though, for some nicely-judged comic performances by Tony Hagarth as Kinvig himself, Patsy Rowlands as his rather vague wife Netta, bug-eyed Colin Jeavons as his UFO-freak friend Jim and an unrecognisable Simon Williams (*Upstairs, Downstairs/Agony*) as a malaprop-dropping Mercurian called Buddo — I can only describe his voice as Malcolm Muggeridge with a Chinese accent, Buddo is well worth a spin-off series.

All-in-all, though, *Kinvig* is still a disappointment and, given Nigel Kneale's proven creative brilliance and an originality second-to-none, I can only assume his ideas and scripts were watered-down and compromised during the long pre-production period. It's all a bit like hiring James Joyce to write *Charlie's Angels*.



Left: A portrait of the principals of the new Nigel Kneale scripted situation comedy series *Kinvig*. The title star, Des Kinvig (Tony Hagarth) spends much of his time in a fantasy world where his customer, Miss Griffin (Prunella Gee), is in reality an envoy from the planet Mercury who is on Earth to thwart the evil plans of an alien race, the Xux. Above: *Kinvig* and the dazzling Miss Griffin. In Kinvig's dream world Miss Griffin is aided in her brave fight against the Xux by three bumbling assistants, Loon, Bat and Sagga. Opposite: Prunella Gee — the dazzling Miss Griffin.





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Convention Corner

Below: Science fiction author Ian Watson. Below right: Two names familiar to Starburst readers: John Brosnan (fermed with a pint of foaming ale, purely medicinal naturally) and John Baxter.

Over Easter weekend this year, from 17th April to 20th April was the annual Easter science fiction convention. This year the event was held at the Dragonara Hotel in Leeds and guests of Honour were American sf writer Thomas Disch and English science fiction author Ian Watson. Several other sf notables made appearances over the weekend, including Chris Priest, John Sladek, John Brunner, Bob Shaw and Michael Moorcock. The highlight of the event was the fancy dress parade, on the Saturday night (see pictures on the facing page) though also in the programme were film screenings (including the British premiere of Golem, the Polish film mentioned in this month's *Things to Come*), an art show, lectures, a disco and other assorted organised mayhem.



Above: Tom Disch was American Guest of Honour. Right: John Brunner and Chris Priest. Opposite page top: The winner of the "Panache" section of the Fancy Dress Parade, Cy Powell, who was attired in the full dress uniform of the Space Commandoes. Opposite left: Starburst editor Alan McKenzie poses for a photograph with the winners of the "Least Dressed" section, Telene and Leish Gamah (as themselves) two members of a race called the Ords (and that is a long story!). Opposite right: Alison Cook as My Lady Chelotina from Michael Moorcock's Dancers at the End of Time, who won the "Best Costume" prize. Though not obvious from the picture the costume was embroidered with LEDs which gave a spectacular effect when the house lights were dimmed.

TEAL VANDOR

Report by Alan McKenzie

Sturday, May 2nd 1981 marked the first Teal Vandor Convention in Holborn, London, an event arranged by fans of the BBC tv series *Blake's 7*. The Convention chairperson, Jill McCaul, and her committee (Pat Thomas, Diane Gies, Anne Lewis, Jane Elicot, Susan Masters) lined up a compact, well-run programme, managing to squeeze in talks and signing sessions by such well-known names as Jacqueline Pearce, Paul Darrow, Jan Chappell, Peter Tuddenham, new producer Vere Lorrimer and BBC Visual Effects Designer (and sometime *Starburst* contributor) Met Irvine.

There were displays of models (the Liberator appearing more than once), costume parades (I counted at least two *Servalans*), a book room and the presentation of a birthday cake (appropriately in the shape of the Liberator) to Paul Darrow.

Films shown included footage from *Blake* episodes (notably Aftermath from the third season), run silent with hilarious commentary by the irrepressible Jacqueline Pearce and Vere Lorrimer.

Roll on next year.



Above: Met Irvine sings *Sinatra!* The BBC Visual Effects Designer who worked on the first season of *Blake's 7* gave an entertaining talk during the early hours of the Convention. Right: Jacqueline Pearce, who plays *Servalan*, was interviewed and also signed autographs for her fans. Below: The birthday boy! Paul Darrow was presented with a Liberator-shaped cake to mark the anniversary of his birth.



THE JAMES BOND CONVENTION

Feature by
John Brosnan



British James Bond convention was held on the 28th and 29th of March this year at the Westmorland Hotel in St John's Wood London. Organised by the James Bond British Fan Club, under the auspices of Bond producer Cubby Broccoli and United Artists, it was a small affair but well run. Guests included Desmond Llewelyn, who has played 'Q' in almost all the films (he brought along the famous brief case from *From Russia With Love*), Walter Gotell, who played a SPECTRE killer in *From Russia With Love* but is better known now for his role as the Russian General Gogol in the recent Bonds, Burt Kwouk, who appeared in *Goldfinger* and *You Only Live Twice* (and plays Cato in the *Pink Panther* movies), Maurice Binder, who creates the Bond title sequences, and Cassandra Harris, one of the stars of the new Bond *For Your Eyes Only* (who was accompanied by her actor husband Pierce Brosnan—and with a name like that he will, no doubt, go far). ●



Top: The one-man helicopter "Little Nellie" used in *You Only Live Twice*. Its inventor, Ken Wallis, was also at the convention. Left: Cassandra Harris, the Australian Actress who co-stars in *For Your Eyes Only*, the latest of the Bond movies. Above: Bert Kwouk, who was shot by Goldfinger in the film of the same name then turned up working for Blofeld in *You Only Live Twice*.

TV ZONE

One of British tv's early fantasy-drama heroes, by way of writer-producer-director, was Rudolph Cartier. Long before the UK medium was given over to the Terry Nations, Gerry Andersons, Patrick McGooahans, etc, Cartier was strongly associated with such atmospheric 50s teledrama as *The Quatermass Experiment*, *Quatermass II*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Creature* and *Quatermass and the Pit*.

Born in Vienna, Austria, on April 17, 1908, Rudolph Cartier went through terms of being a stage designer, journalist and author before entering the film industry in 1929 as screenwriter and then director for UFA in Berlin, later moving to Austria and Czechoslovakia. Eventually, he moved to England and collaborated on various screenplays.

In 1952 Cartier joined the BBC-tv drama department as producer-director and the following year, as senior producer, he made *The Quatermass Experiment*. This was to be the first major fantasy-drama triumph for BBC-tv, and was later followed up with *Quatermass II* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (further collaboration with writer Nigel Kneale; the Orwell masterpiece was adapted by Cartier & Kneale). In 1955 Cartier followed through with *The Creature* and then, in 1958, topped them all with the stunning *Quatermass and the Pit* (still with Nigel Kneale).

Cartier was one of the first few English tv directors to understand and utilize the power of the small-screen medium. "There is not much difference, basically, between the task of a film director and that of a television director. Both tell a story visually and with the aid of sound. But here the similarity ends..." His work during the 1950s, whether it was Anouilh's *Vale of Shadows* or Kneale's *The Creature*, was always produced with a deep and caring awareness of the home viewer. *The Quatermass Experiment*, its sequel *Quatermass II*, and *The Creature*, were more successful on the small tv screen than in the cinema, mainly because of the "hypnotic" power emanating from the tv screen to the viewer, sitting *isolated* in his darkened room. There is nothing to distract him. There is no striking of matches by a tiresome neighbour; no rustling of chocolate papers; no people talking in the row behind; and nobody to tread on his toes and break his concentration as they leave their seats."

Here, Cartier sums up exactly the difference—a difference that evades most film/tv critics—between the presentation of material produced for the theatrical screen.

"When the viewer was watching these 'horror' tv productions of mine, he was—I like to think—completely in my power, and accepted the somewhat far-fetched implications of the plot (such as the man who turned into a vegetable) without a murmur, while, in the cinema, there was usually a titter or false laugh whenever one of these scenes came up."

The great controversial tv play of the 1950s—for British audiences—was George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, produced and directed by Cartier and co-written with Nigel

Kneale. The teleplay slapped the complacent smugness off the audience's face and drove home the extremely bleak and desperate, paranoid and disturbing story of Winston Smith's battle with "Big Brother." It was of course the rat-filled mask sequence that lit up the BBC switchboard and unleashed a thousand angry voices. Although it now appears rather crudely staged by today's tv standards (naturally, as it went out "live" at the time), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* did nevertheless succeed on two principles: it laid a visual uppercut on viewers who until that time were not used to being served with such astounding tv dramas; and went on to prove Cartier's method of maintaining and manipulating tv audiences by approaching them on a sort of one-to-one basis.

"When Orwell's novel was made into a film nearly a year later, all the directorial skill of Michael Anderson could not recapture the impact of the tv transmission. I had to admit he had to contend with an 'Americanized' script and cast; but the main reason was that the subject could only frighten spectators



BY TISE VAHIMAGI

who were 'conditioned' to experience fear by sitting alone in darkness, and unable to find help or comfort by looking around the mass audience in a modern cinema—where they would feel safe from 'Big Brother.'

Again, this difference of presentation is underlined. In terms of mood and atmosphere, for instance, something like Val Lewton's *I Walked With a Zombie* works on the big-screen but only a part of it comes across via the tv screen—whereas something similar in theme like *Pigeons from Hell* (*Thriller*, 1961) can only be truly effective when viewed on television.

Cartier understood these limitations of visual presentation with his version of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "It was decidedly different in the tv viewer's own home, where cold eyes stared from the small screen straight at him, casting into the viewers' heart the same chill that the characters in the play experienced whenever they heard Big Brother's voice coming from their 'watching' tv screens."

On a thematic note Cartier's production of

Nineteen Eighty-Four made popular the "psychology of indoctrination" sub-genre, a theme that has resurfaced again and again in films and teleseries; such as *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Prisoner*, *The Man from UNCLE*, *The Guardians*, 1990, etc.

Despite his minor (in quantity) contribution to the science fiction genre, in terms of overall tv output, Rudolph Cartier is still closely associated in some circles with the family of tele-fantasy producers. It may not be a correct definition, but it does act as a respectful salute to Cartier's sf work. Coincidentally, the same form of appreciation is given to Nigel Kneale—which in both cases is obviously due to the Quatermass collaborations—and Kneale does not consider himself to be a "science fiction writer". Both Cartier and Kneale should be considered as a producer-director and a writer, respectively, who have done some work in the area of science fiction—and done it extremely well in their time.

The following is a list of Rudolph Cartier-Nigel Kneale science fiction tv credits of the 1950s:

The Quatermass Experiment (BBC-tv, 1953)

- 1 *Contact Has Been Established* (July 18)
 - 2 *Person Reported Missing* (July 25)
 - 3 *Very Special Knowledge* (August 1)
 - 4 *Believed To Be Suffering* (August 8)
 - 5 *An Unidentified Species* (August 15)
 - State of Emergency (August 22)
- Cast: Reginald Tate (as Professor Quatermass), Isabel Dean, Hugh Kelly, Duncan Lamont, Paul Whitson-Jones.

Nineteen Eighty-Four (BBC-tv, 1954)

- Cast: Yvonne Mitchell, Peter Cushing, Andre Morell, Donald Pleasance. (Originally telecast December 12, the play was re-run December 16)

The Creature (BBC-tv, 1955)

- Cast: Peter Cushing, Stanley Baker, Wolfe Morris, Eric Pohlmann, Simon Lack, Arnold Marle. (Originally telecast January 30, the play was re-run February 3)

Quatermass II (BBC-tv, 1955)

- 1 *The Bolts* (October 22)
 - 2 *The Mark* (October 29)
 - 3 *The Food* (November 5)
 - 4 *The Coming* (November 12)
 - 5 *The Frenzy* (November 19)
 - 6 *The Destroyer* (November 26)
- Cast: John Robinson (as Professor Quatermass), Monica Grey, Hugh Griffith, John Stone, Brian Hayes.

Quatermass and the Pit (BBC-tv, 1958-59)

- 1 *The Halfmen* (December 22)
 - 2 *The Ghosts* (December 29)
 - 3 *Imps and Demons* (January 5)
 - 4 *The Enchanted* (January 12)
 - 5 *The Wild Hunt* (January 19)
 - 6 *Hob* (January 26)
- Cast: Andre Morell (as Professor Quatermass), Cec Linder, Anthony Bushell, John Stratton, Christine Finn.

Top: A scene from the 1954 BBC production of *1984*. Harry Lane threatens Wilfred Brambell as Peter Cushing and Campbell Gray look helplessly on. Above left: *Panic in Hobbs Lane* in episode six of *Quatermass and the Pit* (BBC-tv 1958/9). John Stratton plays Captain Potter with Christine Finn as Barbara Judd. Above right: More of the same as the crowd flees the area where the Martian ship is buried. Far left: Captain Potter tries to pull Christine Finn from the partly-constructed tube station as the Martians "poltergeist activity" gathers force. Left: The image of one the Martian creatures forms in the sky above London.

it's only a movie*

I t all started, as many things do in my life, in a pub. It was in early 1976 and I was talking to a film industry friend of mine, Peter Saunders. Peter had been working as an essential director to Freddie Francis on a number of horror movies, including *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Creeping Flesh*, *The Ghoul* and *Legend of the Werewolf* and was thinking seriously of trying to make a horror film of his own. Had any ideas, he asked.

"Well, I thought hard for about 3 seconds, which is about the limit of my span of concentration, and suddenly it came to me in a blinding, alcoholic flash: 'What about a movie where the monster is part-man and part-shark? What could it be called? *Jew-Man!*' You will remember, of course, that a certain movie called *Jaws* was doing very well at that time).

Peter stared at me for awhile and I began to wonder if he would simply laugh or throw his drink at me. But he did neither. Instead he said, "You know, that's not a bad idea . . ." And with those words our fate was sealed . . .

The first thing that Peter and I did was to write a brief outline which Peter then registered with the ACTT. Then we started work on the script itself. Now the normal thing to do in this situation is to try to raise some development money before you start writing but we'd decided speed was of the essence.

Well, about four or five frantic weeks later we finished the screen-play—now titled *The Terrible Jew-Man*. It told the story of a scientist called Bruce who injects himself with shark anti-bodies, while trying to find a cure for cancer, and subsequently keeps turning into a shark man. First he goes berserk in a fish restaurant then he starts attacking people in public swimming pools. He even kills someone in their own bath-tub much to the amazement of the police, before being apprehended in an aquarium and shot with a spear gun. He manages to escape into the sea but later a shark is caught by a local fisherman and the last shot in the film shows the hooked fish, dangling on the pier, slowly turning back into a man.

Yes, it was intended to be a sort of spoof on movies like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon* and, of course, *Jaws*, but on the surface it would have been a straight horror film . . .

After the script was finished I sat back while Peter got on with the really hard work—selling the idea to the film industry. First he approached the National Film Finance Board which is a government-backed body set up to

help finance British movies. It was then headed by Sir John Terry and to my amazement he liked *Jew-Man* and offered to provide half the total budget, but only if we could find the rest of the money and a distributor.

There are now only two British distributing companies in existence, Rank and EMI, but in 1976 British Lion was still around as well so Peter decided to try them first, mainly because an old acquaintance of his, Michael Deeley, was in charge of the company.

Deeley agreed to read the script and a few days later asked Peter to go and see him again. Peter did, while I spent the day biting my nails and the nails of anyone else who came too close to me. That night I saw Peter in the local pub. He looked pale and wan and was knocking back the whiskies.

"Well?" I asked in a sort of high-pitched squeak.

"Mike loves it," Peter told me. "There's just one thing he wants changed . . ."

"Yes!" I cried. "Anything he wants! We'll change it! When do we get the money? Have another drink! Everyone have a drink! Drinks for the house, on me!"

"He wants John Cleese to play the shark man," said Peter quietly.



Left: The poster art for the film that started the whole thing, Steven Spielberg's first major motion picture, *Jaws*. Above: One of the inspirations for *Jew-Man* was *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. *Jew-Man* would have vaguely resembled *Gill-Man*, and our shark man would have had a fondness for the opposite sex.

Right: Orca was one of the many *Jaws* imitators that appeared in the wake of the Spielberg movie. But at least Orca has *Be Derek* — here she is shortly before the killer whale bites one of her legs off (as to what he is doing in her living room, you'll have to see the movie to find out!)

starring John Brosnan

I cancelled the drinks order. "John Cleese? But it's not that sort of movie ... and he wouldn't want to be involved anyway..."

Peter nodded sadly. "But it's John Cleese or nothing."

That was Major Setback Number One.

Around this time we acquired a producer. It's hard to raise money or interest in a film project if you don't have some well-known people involved so Peter contacted Norman Priggin, a producer he'd worked with in the past. Priggin, known as "Spike" in the business, had started out at Ealing Studios and during the 1960s had produced a number of Joe Lye's films. More recently he'd produced horror movies, like *Tales That Witness Madness*.

Spike read the script and agreed to join us, providing he could make a number of changes to it. After all, as he said, he had his reputation to think of.

When I met Spike at our first script conference it occurred to me that if he'd been a few years younger he would have been perfect for the role of Jaw-Man as he had the sort of aggressive, jutting jaw that looked as if it could cut through 2-inch armour plate with ease. "He can be pretty

formidable," Peter had warned me beforehand and at first I was nervous about crossing verbal swords with him over the script in case he leapt up and bit me in the leg. But he turned out to be a rather charming person and I was soon putting up a strong fight to protect my golden words:

"But that's a very funny line! The funniest in the whole script! And it's important too! It's a plot pivot!"

"No, it's not," Spike would say, "it's weak schoolboy humour. Cut it."

And I would cut it. And I cut, and cut. But I must admit that by the time Spike had hacked his way through the script it was much improved. Improved? It had been transformed.

So next we approached Rank which at that time was still producing films instead of just distributing them as they do now. Rank turned us down without giving us any definite reason but we later heard a rumour that the head of Rank had shown the script of *Jaw-Man* to his wife who'd told him she thought it was all very "distasteful". Good grief! I mean to say, what's distasteful about a man who turns into a shark and goes around eating people in their bath-tubs?

Major Setback Number Two.

Number Three was EMI. They weren't in the least interested in

Jaw-Man, particularly when they found out British Lion had been approached first. As the merger between EMI and British Lion was then imminent they weren't willing to even consider a project that Deely had already rejected (we didn't tell them about the John Cleese factor).

But all was not lost. A film maker named Ian Shand had appeared on the scene. Shand had previously made a number of documentaries and films for the Children's Film Foundation but was now anxious to get into feature film production. He'd set up a company at Pinewood Studios called Q Films and was looking for suitable properties. Peter, who knew him, showed him *Jaw-Man* and Shand liked it so much he actually offered to pay us for an option on the script.

It wasn't much money but it was the first I'd seen since the project had begun and I took it as a sign that things were starting to move at last.

Then something even more incredible happened. Shand showed the script to the representative of a well-known American film company, which shall remain nameless, and he loved our shark man. I mean, baby, he loved it. And he said he was sending it off to his head office in Hollywood with a recommendation they do it. They always

follow his advice, he claimed, so we could take it for granted that shooting would begin in October without fail.

Success! Ecstasy! Euphoric Champagne! Gee, I said to myself, this film game is easy!

Preparations were made at Pinewood. Studio space was booked, an art director was hired and we started to think seriously about auditioning sharks.

Then came the Mother-Ship of Major Setbacks. A mere two weeks before everything was due to get underway word came from the States that the film company concerned, which will still remain nameless, had finally decided not to go ahead with *Jaw-Man*. Their reasons? Well, they thought it was too close to a 1950s horror film in plot. But of course it was. It was supposed to be; but apparently no one had told them it was a spoof. And since then *Alien* has proved that using plots from 1950s horror movies can be a damn good idea. The other reason they turned it down was because it was too cheap! "No one is making cheap horror movies anymore," they said.

This was rather ironic as Peter and I had specifically written the film so it could be made as cheaply as possible. I immediately suggested that one way of making it more expensive would be to charge a million dollars each for our services but it was too late. Our *Jaw-Man* was sinking like a stone into the dark waters of oblivion, metaphorically speaking ...

Naturally, we were all pretty depressed but we didn't give up completely. Shand tried to interest some Arabs in the project and Peter and I even approached John Cleese, or rather we approached his agent (we were that desperate). Needless to say, Mr Cleese wasn't interested.

By the end of 1978 we were forced to admit defeat. *Jaw-Man* was kaput and we all moved on to other things; Ian Shand producing *Wombling Free* for Rank (they would have done better with *Jaw-Man*) and Peter and I writing a script for Spike based on a novel he'd bought the film rights to (and what happened to that movie is another story).

In the years since then a hell of a lot of Jaws rip-offs have squelched onto our screens, including *Orca*, *Tintorera*, *Tentacles* and *Piranha* and yet what would have proved to have been the best and most entertaining rip-off of them all remains un-made. I feel sorry for all those cinema fans who will never have the opportunity of seeing this great movie though most of all I feel sorry about all that money I never got my hands on ...

But that's show business, folks. ●



book world

It is not every day that the humble book reviewer is given the opportunity to transform himself into an instrument of vengeance, not to say a Crusader for Cosmic Justice. Indeed, it isn't a part for which I feel particularly well-endowed: I'm not as tall as Christopher Reeve, or as square-jawed, and I don't have any scarlet Y-fronts. But now I have the chance to strike a blow for the poor, maligned Lew Grades and Stanley Kubrick's of the world, for what I have in my hands here is a novel by none other than *Starburst*'s very own John Brosnan: *Skyship* (Hamlyn, £1.65).

It's Brosnan's first novel, assuming we discount his justly obscure (and unpublished) *An Echo of Jackboots*, and it's an addition to the good old disaster genre. One might summarize it as *The Towering Inferno* meets *The Poseidon Adventure* at Airport. To say this, though, is not to insult the book, or to suggest that it lacks distinctive qualities.

The skyship of the title is *Phoenix*, a nuclear-powered airship some 2000 feet long, capable of carrying a considerable payload of both passengers and freight. It's comfortable, fast and seemingly about as safe as it's possible for any flying object to be. It has been built by larger-than-life Texas oil millionaire Jay-Jay Ballard, who hopes it will be the first of a fleet that will revolutionize air transport (and, in the process, make him a few more millions). But, inevitably, such a project attracts the unwelcome attention of rival business groups, and so Ballard hires security expert Michael Colino, and his buddy Peter Else, to ensure that nothing goes wrong during the *Phoenix*'s final preparations and maiden transatlantic trip. Colino's problem, aside from the gangs of people queuing up to sabotage the *Phoenix*, is that he's terrified of flying.

Well, okay, you don't need to be the author to know the general drift of what's going to happen. You know that as the book nears its climax the airship is going to be drifting helplessly towards the centre of New York, its nuclear reactor approaching the point of meltdown. You know there will be a procession of people falling off it, jumping off it, and being pushed off it. You know that Colino is eventually going to get Ballard's beautiful but icy daughter Felicity. You even know, from a fairly early point, who the 'surprise' villain will turn out to be. (But I won't give it away). Without all this stuff there would be no point to the book, just as *The Towering Inferno* would have lacked something as a film had there been no fire. The pleasures of the disaster novel or movie are two-fold. First, the author instructs you in some detail on a subject about which you know very little, but he apparently knows a great deal. He may be making it all up, for all you know. That doesn't matter: what's important is that you're convinced he's an expert.

Brosnan scores pretty well on this point. He has airship history at his fingertips, and works it into the novel without being too obvious about it. He has little difficulty in convincing me that airships are a much better and safer than jet aircraft (though as one who shares Colino's phobia I'm possibly biased). The technical detail of *Phoenix*'s construction and operation is thoroughly persuasive, as far as I'm concerned.

The second pleasure is in watching the thing—be it airship or skyscraper or ocean liner—being destroyed. This has to be a gradual, long-drawn-out process; a small mishap leads to a minor problem, which gives rise to a major difficulty, which ends in total disaster. Each initiative is thwarted by new setbacks, until ultimately the hero saves himself, his newly-acquired lover, and a lucky few others.

Again, *Skyship* scores pretty well. The airship's demise is carefully and lovingly described, with major setpieces as it collides with skyscrapers and so forth, wreaking havoc. A pedantically-minded reader might wonder why the crew of the stricken airship try to steer it up Fifth Ave in New York, lined on either side with tall buildings, when they might equally well have aimed for Seventh Avenue, where there are few if any especially tall skyscrapers. But such a

reader would be missing the point. The *Phoenix* isn't a real airship attempting to avoid such collisions: it's a fictional construct whose main purpose in life is to smash into the Empire State Building.

So *Skyship* is a pretty successful example of the disaster novel. It isn't, to be perfectly honest, the kind of book I particularly enjoy, but it's a very professional and readable novel which I read more or less at a single sitting. I wished Brosnan had allowed himself more of the sharp-edged wit and sarcasm which occasionally creeps into the narrative ("he considered himself to be a totally self-made man and took great pride in his creation"); perhaps in his next novel he'll allow himself more individual touches. But for now all *Starburst* readers should of course rush out and buy copies and turn it into a bestseller. This applies whatever your opinion of his film reviews.



by john bowles

If you enjoy them of course you'll want to show your appreciation; if you can't stand them, just consider the prospect that his making a huge fortune on this book will mellow him to the extent where he will be full of warmth and generosity to the next *Star Trek* or *Black Hole* that comes his way.

I've been reading quite a lot of old sf "classics" lately, generally with great disappointment. Novels which I thought were terrific when I was 15 turn out on re-examination to be fairly trashy. It's a pleasure, then, to report on a reissue of two novels which when they first came out didn't impress me much, but which I very much enjoyed this time. The novels in question are *Black Easter* and *The Day After Judgement* by James Blish, which have just been reissued in a single volume (*Arrow £1.50*). It's a good idea of the publishers to amalgamate them, since they

form a continuous narrative—the second novel begins a matter of hours after the first ends.

Black Easter is the most detailed account I know in fiction of the actual practice of black magic—specifically, the summoning of demons. It's odd, therefore, to find it consistently classified as science fiction. The setting is the present day, and it describes the commission which magician Theron Ware receives to let loose for one night on Earth all the demons of Hell (or as many as he can manage). He does so, but it misfires badly and he inadvertently sets off Armageddon. Blish was an authority on magic and when he says that the novel "deals with what real sorcery had to be like if it existed" you can believe. As a result the novel is both fascinatingly informative and highly convincing. *The Day After Judgement* shows Blish's science fiction writer's imagination examining the consequences of the situation. The City of Hell is raised in Death Valley, California, and the demons are at large in the world, confronted by a determined US Strategic Air Command...

It's a more playful novel than its predecessor, but no less entertaining. And it has an extremely ambitious, and generally successful climactic scene, which Blish (for perfectly good reasons) undertook to write as a pastiche of John Milton. A novel which ends in a long passage of poetry may be offputting—but don't be put off, because it does make sense. Recommended—and a Gold Star to Arrow for bringing the books back into print in this way.

I am just back from this year's British Science Fiction Convention in Leeds (don't miss the feature on page 46 this issue—Editor). Guests of Honour were Thomas M. Disch and Ian Watson; other authors in attendance included John Sladek, Christopher Priest, John Brunner, Bob Shaw and—fleeting—Michael Moorcock. A good time was had by all. At the convention the 1981 British Science Fiction Awards (or Camell Awards) were announced, voted on by members of the convention and/or of the British Science Fiction Association. Best novel was *Timescape* by Gregory Benford; best short fiction, "The Brave Little Toaster" by Thomas M. Disch; best artist Peter Jones; and best media presentation

the second radio series of—you guessed it—*Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

This time of year marks the beginning of the awards season: in the USA the Nebula Awards, given by the Science Fiction Writers of America, have just been announced (yesterday, as I write). Best novel was, again, *Timescape* (which I reviewed with some enthusiasm in *Starburst* 26); best novella was "The Unicorn Tapestry" by Suzy McKee Charnas (part of a novel, *The Vampire Tapestry*, as yet unpublished in the UK). My bushy telegraph hasn't yet conveyed the winners of the other short story awards. Nominees for the Hugo Awards—the oldest and probably the most prestigious of the sf awards, have just been announced; they will be presented in September. There isn't room to list them all, but the five novels short-listed are *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* by Frederik Pohl (sequel to *Gateway*), *Lord Valentine's Castle* by Robert Silverberg, *Ringworld Engineers* by Larry Niven, *The Snow Queen* by Joan Vinge and *Wizard* by John Varley (sequel to *Titan*). All are now available in Britain, though only *Wizard* is in paperback (Future). Incredibly, *Timescape* isn't on the list. In the catch-all Best Dramatic Presentation categories there are two movies—*The Empire Strikes Back* and *Flash Gordon*—the TV mini-series of *The Martian Chronicles* and two items we haven't yet seen in Britain: Carl Sagan's factual tv series *Cosmos*, and the much-acclaimed tv adaptation of Ursula Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. My money is on *The Snow Queen* and *The Empire Strikes Back*.

A final, sad piece of news for readers of ghost stories (or strange stories, as he preferred to call them) is that the British author Robert Ackman—generally considered the best writer in this vein since Lovecraft—died on February 26th, after a long illness. Some readers (myself, I confess, among them) find many of his stories slow and rather long-winded; but they have gained him an immense critical reputation, and a World Fantasy Award. His books included *Sub Rose*, *Cold Hand in Mine*, *Tales of Love and Death* and *Intrusions*.

COMPETITION CORNER

Here is your big chance to win a copy of the new John Brosnan novel *Skyship*. All you have to do is look at this picture of the author (if you can stand it!) and write a witty caption for the photograph—just what is John saying or thinking? We have a dozen copies of the book to give away, courtesy of Dede Millar and Hamlyn paperbacks, to the best twelve entries out of the postbag. The competition closes on 30th August 1981 and is not open to relatives of John Brosnan.



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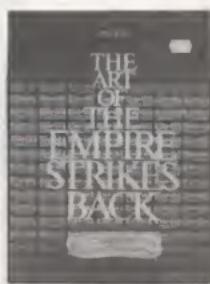
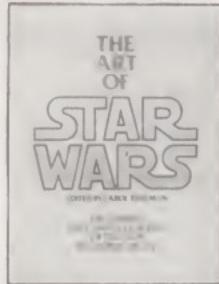


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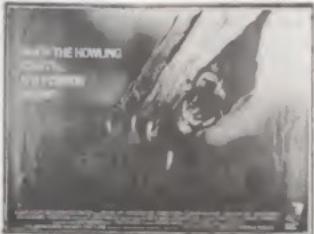
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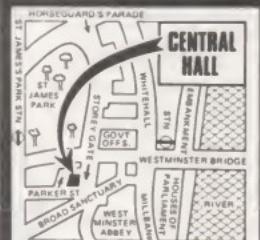
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A STARBURST INTERVIEW WITH

RICHARD DONNER

John Brosnan talks to the director of *Superman I*, who was relieved of duty on *Superman II* after a difference of opinion with the producers.

It was not an auspicious start for an interview—as we entered Richard Donner's hotel suite I turned to introduce intrepid *Starburst* photographer Joyce Agee and accidentally gave Mr Donner a sharp blow in the groin with the corner of the heavy bag hanging from my shoulder, an action which caused him to double over in pain (while doing so he quipped: "Should I cough now?").

But Richard Donner is not a man to hold a grudge, though he's had plenty of reasons to do so during his career, and we quickly settled down to what turned out to be a very enjoyable interview. The only other alarming moment came when Ms Agee, who is a very mobile photographer, flung herself backwards with a loud crash into a lamp stand (for a moment I thought she was going out through the window—it's certainly never dull when *Starburst* comes to interview you!).

Donner, who was in London to promote his new movie *Inside Moves*, is a very charming, amusing and likeable man. Originally he wanted to be an actor but took the advice of director Martin Ritt and started working behind the camera instead of in front of it. After working as Ritt's assistant in New York he went to Hollywood in 1958 where he directed a number of tv commercials and documentaries before going on to do his first dramatic episode in a tv series, which was *Wanted: Dead or Alive* with Steve McQueen. In the years that followed he worked on such well known tv series as *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Perry Mason*, *Route 66*, *The Fugitive*, *Get Smart* and *The Twilight Zone*.

On the subject of the latter show I mentioned to Donner that he'd directed one of my favourite episodes—*Nightmare at 20,000 Feet*, written by Richard Matheson and starring William Shatner (he

played a man who keeps seeing a gremlin on the wing of his plane). "That's my favourite too," said Donner. "But it's funny because I got fired on that one. It was the first one I did and it was scheduled for 3 days shooting—that was all you ever got for a half-hour show, 2 days for preparation and 3 for shooting—but that episode had the most special effects ever done in a tv show up until that time. We had the gremlin flying on and off the wing, with wires, we had wind, rain, lightning, we had the spinning prop on the airplane engine—it was unbelievable special effects for a half hour show so they gave me a fourth day. It was unheard of but they gave it to me. Then, halfway through the third day, they came to us and said, 'You got to finish today!' I asked why and they said a major company was coming in and taking over the tank set we were on. And I said, 'I can't do it that fast! It's impossible!' And they said, 'You have to!' And what happened was that I went all night, which again was unheard of in tv to go over like that, and we finished as the crews for the other company were coming in the next morning, literally. And I got canned. For a time I was kind of banned. And then the show came out and it got the highest ratings they'd had and suddenly I was back in their good graces."

I asked Donner about Rod Sterling, the creator of the show. "He had total control. He was a wonderful guy, though because he knew how to allocate authority. He had a great producing staff and a great writing staff—we would have long talks before each show end then he'd leave you alone. He was a pleasure to work with really. He was a lovely man and you loved to have him hang around the set because all of a sudden some great idea would fall out of his head

and you'd run with it..."

Another show he worked on was *The Man from UNCLE*. "I did the first one in that series—not the actual pilot, that was shot by Boris Sagal—but I did the first show which was an honour in those days because I hadn't been directing that long. It was an MGM series and you were stepping into the Big Time when you went to work for MGM. It was like playing in the Yankee Stadium if you were a ball player. And you could have anything you wanted, like cranes, special construction crews, top special effects people. For a tv series *UNCLE* had great production values—it always looked good. MGM took great pride in the making of the product and it was very competitive then. There were a lot of studios in business during television in those days..."

I asked about his involvement with *Gilligan's Island*, a comedy series that, though very popular, eventually became synonymous with all that was mindless about American tv. "Actually I loved that show. It was produced by a man called Sherwood Schwartz, who had gone through the whole *Un-American Activities* investigations in the early 50s, and I think those shows, if you sit down and analyse them, had great social significance in the beginning when Sherwood worked on them. There was this ship's captain and his mate—there was the rich couple, there was the young liberal doctor, there was the glamour girl (Tina Louise . . . sigh)—all of them stuck together on the island and the social structure was very interesting if you broke it down but very few people saw what was in it."

I mentioned the title of another series that Donner worked on for Sherwood Schwartz, *It's About Time*,



"I remembered Superman as a kid and I said to myself, 'This is a piece of American tradition here . . . it should be treated with respect!'"



"To this day [Richard Lester] has never picked up the phone to say, 'they're talking to me about taking over your picture . . .'"



"You loved to have [Rod Sterling] around the set because all of a sudden some great idea would fall out of his head."



This Day: A selection
Richard Donner
page: Certain

and this provoked a surprised reaction from him. "Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed. "You did your research!" For a moment I was tempted to bask in my role as the complete professional but I came clean and admitted much of the information came from a book called *The American Vein* written by fellow Starburst contributor Tise Vehimagi and script-writer Chris Wicking. Donner immediately enquired about where he could get a copy. "Perhaps I should buy them all and burn them," he laughed, then he started to reminisce about *It's About Time* which was about two astronauts who go through space warp and get stuck in prehistoric times. "Hell, I still remember how the theme song went!" He then proceeded to sing: "It's About Time . . . It's About Space . . . dah, dah, dah . . . Let's see, who was in it? Imogene Coca and . . . Mike Mazurky! Holy ***! Oh, I loved that show! It was thick, stupid and wonderful and I loved doing that kind of thing. It was non-analytical, you just went in and laughed yourself silly doing it. Same with *Gilligan's Island*, it was wonderful to work on. I hadn't thought about it in a lot of years but I enjoyed it. I used to come home laughing every night, I used to laugh at the dailies even but I sure can't say it was a show that worked on any real intellectual level . . ."

Did working in television, with its rushed schedules and other pressures, ever become a real chore for Donner? Did it ever become a rat race for him? "Not really. It only became rough for me after I came over here and did a picture which failed and then had to go back to tv. Then I came back here and worked on a screenplay with a wonderful writer, John Gould—

who's since died—and I spent a long time working on it but the picture never got off the ground so I went back to tv again and it was a whole new regime and nobody knew who I was so I had to start all over again. But I never looked at working in tv as a hardship. I always felt very fortunate that I was working. I feel I owe tv everything—it doesn't owe me."

Though Donner didn't really break away from tv completely until his success with *The Omen* in 1976 he actually made his first feature film back in 1962, which was *X-15*. "It was a dramatic documentary with Merv Tyler Moore and Charlie Bronson. It was about the first man in space, flying the rocket plane X-15. It used to be launched from a B-52 up there in the stratosphere and it broke the then existing altitude record. The producer had seen something I'd done on tv and asked if I would direct all 2nd unit stuff—all the aerial footage. And I said, hell, yes! Second unit director on a feature? Sure! Originally I think Lewis Milestone was supposed to direct it but he must have read the script . . . when he turned it down they offered it to me. I did it—I shot it in 12 days—and then I went back to tv.

"My next feature came about six years later. It was *Salt and Pepper* with Sammy Davis Jr and Peter Lawford and I got fired from it. I finished shooting it but they took over the cutting. They wanted to do it their way and they could because they had complete control over it—they were the producers."

"Then I did another picture with Charlie Bronson which again was shot here. It was called *Twinkly* and I loved it. It was about a 38-year-old writer having an

affair with a 15-year-old girl, played by Susan George, and it ends up with him marrying her. In Europe they loved it but in England it hung around for about an hour in the cinemas. In the States it was bought by AIP who renamed it, redubbed an recut it and added some sex scenes. It did okay there under the name of *Lola* but it did nothing for my career. The dopes should have kept the name *Twinkly* because in the States there's a cookie called that and it fitted the movie perfectly because that's what the girl was . . . a cookie."

It was seven years before Donner directed another feature—in the meantime he worked on several tv shows, such as *Kojak*, *Cannon* and *The Streets of San Francisco*, and also directed a number of made-for-tv movies, the most successful of which was *Sara T. Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic* which achieved amazingly high ratings when it was shown on American tv in 1974. Then came *The Omen* . . .

"By the time I got to read the script it had been rejected by every studio. Warners had optioned it but then decided they weren't going to make it. I read it on the Friday before the weekend they were due to drop it—an agent had given it to me—and I thought it would be terrific if they dropped certain things. At that point it was called *The Anti-Christ* and it was very much in the satanic film genre with devils and cloven hooves, satanic meetings and a great deal of bloodletting but I thought if you could get rid of all that you would end up with a good mystery-suspense thriller. And Alan Ladd Jr, a friend of mine, was then running 20th Century-Fox so I ran over to him that very night

and said, 'You got to read it' and he read it that weekend and came to me and said, 'You know, if you eliminate everything that's obvious in this I think you've really got a good script' ... and I said, 'That's right where I'm at!' So he said, 'Then you've got it.'

"That was on Monday and on Wednesday I was in London—that fast. In fact I was the one who told the producer what was happening to his picture. I called him and said, 'You know your script *The Anti-Christ*, it's being dropped from Werners ...' and he said, 'Yeah, I know', and then I said, 'Well, I've just sold it to Fox and I'm directing it ...'

"I really enjoyed making it because I felt I was ready to succeed with a feature and it was a good piece of material. I never expected it to take off in the incredible way it did but I felt it was going to do well and I thought it was going to get me out of TV and back into pictures. And it did ... overnight."

Had he, I wondered, been tempted to do the sequel to *The Omen*? "I might have except that *Superman* came into my life and it was a whole new challenge ... but when I first read the script I rejected it! It was about 550 pages long and was like the *Batman* TV series in style so I turned it down. Then later they came back to me again and I said the only way I would do it was if I could do a major rewrite. Finally they consented to this and so I brought Tom Mankiewicz in to work on it. The reason I wanted to do it was that originally it was going to be done by Europeans with an English director, Guy Hamilton—and for a time it was going to be shot in Italy because he couldn't come into England (for tax reasons). Now America's still a new country and say what you will, all we've got is the American Indian and *Superman* and you don't mess around with either of them—it's our only history. I remembered *Superman* as a kid and I said to myself, 'This is a piece of American tradition here ... it should be treated with respect.' And that was the challenge to me and I must say the producers really accepted my attitude and my approach to it."

I suggested to Donner that if he hadn't become involved with *Superman* it would have probably have ended up like *Flash Gordon*, which was produced by an Italian and directed by an Englishman, Mike Hodges. "Well, Mike is one of my favourite directors. He did two of my favourite pictures, *Get Carter* and *Help!*, which I thought had touches of genius. I haven't seen *Flash Gordon* but friends of mine have—people I respect—and they love it. Maybe Mike was right that he went about it differently than I did. If we all conformed to the same style it would be dull. Apparently Mike did it exactly like a comic book ..."

If only he had, I said, but unfortunately he made it exactly like the *Batman* TV series. I also mentioned to Donner that I'd heard rumours that the overall style of the movie had more to do with Dino De Laurentiis than Mike Hodges. Donner admitted this was a possibility, then said, "Hey, did you know they're doing *Batman* as a feature? But Tom Mankiewicz is going to write it and he's got a wonderful handle on the character. They're going to go back to why he became Batman and what his family background was like. It should be good but I don't want to do any more of those things. I've done mine ..."

I made the mild accusation that *Superman* had a mixture of styles and Donner readily admitted to this. "There were three pictures—Krypton was a separate picture, for me, and then I had the transition during the trip to Earth where we went into Norman Rockwell Americana with Smallville, and then that moment when he flew out of the ice castle I cut in on that sound of the car horn in New York and you were into the comic book. In fact Jack Kroll in *Newsweek* did about 8 pages in colour just picking out the three pictures—I was really thrilled that that kind of critic loved it and saw the three separate pictures and how it built to the parody of this man who could do anything on the face of the Earth but had to play this

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wonderfully bumbling Clark Kent. There's never a picture where you don't want to change or redo something but overall I love *Superman—the Movie*."

Originally it had been planned to shoot both *Superman* Part 1 and 2 together but this idea was abandoned in order to complete Part 1 in time to meet the release date. However Donner did shoot a good deal of Part 2 and I asked him how much of his footage made it into Richard Lester's version of Part 2 (which doesn't feature Donner's name anywhere in the credits). "Percentage-wise, I can't figure it out exactly but I would say that a little under half is my footage. All the Gene Hackman stuff ... all the stuff in the diner which I personally love. It made a wonderful end for the picture ... it was an idea that Tom Mankiewicz and I came up with ... there's a lot of mine still in it."

"I saw the picture and quite honestly I think it's going to do very well, very well, but it's a different picture to Part 1. It's more teenage ... it's got a James Bond kind of 11-year-old approach which is probably the best approach for the sequel. I can't argue with them. It's their film. I was heartbroken that I couldn't finish it because I would have given a lot of time and effort to it."

I mentioned that when I'd interviewed some of the effects men, Colin Chivells, Derek Meddings and Roy Field, for *Starburst* 7 it was obvious from the way that they talked about him that he'd had a good working relationship with all the British technicians. Donner agreed: "It was an amazing relationship with a group of people who melded completely—a marriage of all those incredible technical minds—the best in the business. You couldn't have made that picture anywhere else in the world because you would never have got that many technicians together under one roof. And they were the best—people like Denis Coop of the great cameramen who was only going to work on the picture for a couple of weeks but stayed on for the entire run because he got so involved with front projection; Colin Chivells, coming up with all those fantastic mechanical devices; Les Bowie, God rest him, who was a genius; Geoffrey Unsworth and John Berry—I loved both of them—they're gone now ... and that's why I was very hurt over what happened because I did feel that I had a great obligation to a lot of people to finish that picture, and also to Chris and Margot who I also love dearly ..."

"My big hurt was Dick Lester who was a very dear friend of mine, I thought, but to this day has never picked up the phone to say, 'They're talking to me about taking over your picture ... and I've decided to do it,' I've never heard from him ..."

I asked if there had been any disagreements with the producers over the direction he took with the movie. "No. We were in accord. They loved the picture so whatever the reason is, it's theirs. They obviously had a good reason but I don't know it. I only know it blew me out emotionally. I was hanging around waiting to come back on *Superman 2*—and as a matter of fact I turned down *Altered States* thinking I was coming back here—but that's showbiz ... You hear stories about things like this happening to directors but you don't think it's ever going to happen to you but it did. At first I was really hurt and then I got angry and it's the anger now that's continuing. It's in the hands of the lawyers now. I'm suing them."

How did Lester's version of Part 2 differ from what Donner would have done? "It wouldn't have been that much different. Lester cut a lot of what I shot and he also changed my script but most of my script is still there. I guess Lester's film is more comedic comic book comedic—and maybe he's right. I think the picture is going to do very well. I hope it does. It's just that everyone reads a piece of material differently and you attack it differently. I would probably have done it a little more on a realistic basis, and I think I probably would have put a little more effort



into the effects and the opticals because I'm something of a perfectionist and I think that was the success of Part 1. But as Jack Kroll said in *Newsweek*, because Part 1 worked so beautifully you can get away with anything on Part 2. It doesn't matter if you spend less time and money on Part 2 because once you've seen him fly in Part 1 it's been established that he can fly ... and after that you can get away with murder ..."

After working for over 2 years on such a production as *Superman* I presumed that it must have been something of a relief to work again on a small, personal picture like *Inside Moves*. "Yeah," said Donner, "I loved it. It was about real people. I mean, I like *Superman 2* but it was more about mechanics than characters."

And the next Donner project? "It's a picture called *Ladyhawk*. It's a 14th-century French fable—a love story with Faustian elements. The evil Bishop has sold his soul to the devil, and the young lovers will never be together until the curse has been taken off them. We'll either be making it here in England or on the Continent, or both. Either way we start production in May."

At this point, as he had to rush and catch a plane, we wound up the interview. After thanking him for his time and wishing him good luck with *Ladyhawk* we made our way carefully out of his suite, thus succeeding in not knocking over any more items of furniture or inflicting any more grievous bodily harm on our illustrious interviewee. No doubt the relief was mutual.



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